None lives but who feels for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden. Feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad. Then will come help, power and indomitable energy.

I see there are some poor, because it is for my salvation. I will go and worship them. God is there. Some are here miserable for your and my salvation, so that, we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper and the sinner.

The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted let these be your God. Know that service to these is the highest religion.

He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children, must serve this world first. It is said in the Gita that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants.

I bequeath to you this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed.

Swami Vivekananda

SEVA

(SERVICE AS WORSHIP)

Based on the original work "Seva" in Bengali



SWAMI NAROTTAMANANDA

Rs. 1/-

Published by
SWAMI SATYANANDA
Offg. Hony. Asst. Secretary
THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION
HOME OF SERVICE,
BENARES

Printed by
JITENDRA NATH DEY
THE SREEKRISHNA PRINTING WORKS
259, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta

To

My Spiritual Guide

SWAMI BRAHMANANDAJI MAHARAJ

The beloved disciple of

SRI SRI RAMKRISHNA DEVA

Narottamananda

While certain portions from the book "Seva" (Bengali) were being read over to His Holiness Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Ramkrishna Mission, he remarked :

"Yes, all these occurred before our eyes, and we are aquainted with all the facts. The book will be of great use to those, who do not know all these and who will do 'Seva' work. You will do well to read the book."

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The success achieved by SwamiNarottamananda's Bengali original 'Seva', coupled with the earnest request of a few friends, who undertook to bear all the expenses of its publication, have prompted us to bring out an English version of the book. Now it is expected to appeal to a wider circle of readers both in India and abroad. The book gives a graphic account of a life of intense self-sacrifice led by the late Swami Shubhananda, who sponsored and nourished for many years the Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service in Benares. We should all be grateful to those friends whose liberality enables us to place before a bigger public a life of such rare quality as depicted in these pages. Swami Narottamananda's book in Bengali is a masterpiece, which has already made its mark not only as the record of the life of a great soul but also as a literary attempt of no mean order. A translation of such a work, therefore, needed all the resources of a first class craftsman. A labour of love is best done by an admirer and we are very glad to say that this task has now been satisfactorily performed by our worthy friend Mr. Bhuban Mohan Ghosal, Professor of the Benares Training College and an ardent admirer of the late Swami Shubhananda.

Mr. Ghosal at first doubted his ability to render a faithful translation, but that was only a reverential misgiving, and we can now see what a signal success he has achieved.

We take this opportunity of returning our especial thanks to him for his expert assistance, and to our other friends and well-wishers as well, who, in different ways, have contributed to the success of this effort. May the blessings of the Lord be on all of them.

The sale-proceeds of the book, as in the case of its original, will be devoted to the relief of the poor at the Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares.

PUBLISHER

FOREWORD

At the request of Srimat Swami Narottamananda, I have looked through the whole of his Seva or Service as Worship, and made additions and alterations, where necessary, without materially interfering with his style and thought. This being his first literary venture, it is natural that there seould be short-comings here and there; but the work as a whole is undoubtedly worthy of high praise. The world-famed Sri Sri Ramkrishna and Vivekananda came down to this earth as a preceptor and disciple. This book gives an account, however inadequate, of the noble philanthrophic work the Ramkrishna Mission has been doing throughout India for the secular welfare and spiritual uplift of its people under the inspiration of the lives and teachings, in keeping with the spirit of the times, of these two great personalities.

It deals specially with the history of the famous Ramkrishna Mission of Benares in a graceful and charming style, which all afford a serene delight to all men of taste and feeling. From ancient times there has been a belief in India that Monistic Vedanta is realisable only by sages who have renounced all and cut themselves off from the haunts of men. But Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva taught that the monistic cult is open to all through an easier

path and that if it could be popularised, man's life would be more happy and peaceful. Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva set forth this glorious truth before modern India and inaugurated a new path of devotion of which the Ramkrishna Mission is the best practical demonstration. This is clear to all who have intimate acquaintanee with the quiet and unostentatious work done by this institution. The soul that dwells in every created being is Brahman. The spirit that animates them is the same though their bodies are different. The idea that one individual is different from another is an illusion ; this error is the cause of all the trouble and misery in this world.

In this book is clearly shown how this great truth propounded by the great sage can turn the course of the life of the householder and make him a servant of all, how he might be freed by it from the bondage of the world and urged to sacrifice himself in the service of the poor, the helpless and the miserable.

It is true that the reader will not find in this work thrilling incidents of a romance or the unfettered creative power of the poetic imagination ; but the central figure of this narration, Swami Subhananda (Charuchandra), a man in flesh and blood with a soul that transcends the human, surpasses the most perfect of the heroes of fiction depicted by the greatest artists. And yet in drawing this figure the writer had not to draw upon his

imagination in the least. Every detail of this sketch is natural, open to the experience of all and bears the stamp of patent and undoubted truth.

No son or daughter of India, who peruses these pages can fail to be convinced that this unostentatious character, intoxicated with the spirit of service, meek and gentle, without a touch of pride, indefatigable, yet a skilled worker, a selfless sage, has brought honour to everybody, the motherland and to the nation.

Charuchandra's life answers to the glorious ideal of the "Sanatana Dharma" (Eternal Religion) thus set forth in the Puranas :

नकामयेऽहम गतिमीश्वरात् परा
मष्टर्द्धियुक्तामपुनर्भवं वा ।
आर्त्तिं प्रपद्येऽखिल देहभाजा
मन्तःस्थितो येन भवन्त्य दुःखाः ।

I do not ask of the Lord a higher life, endowed with the eight supernatural powers, nor do I ask for salvation. Let me inhabit the bodies of all miserable creatures so that I may bear all their sufferings and they be free therefrom.

Charuchandra was in our midst only the other day bearing the all-conquering banner of the Prophet of the New Era, Paramhamsa Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva, and rousing as with the blast of the auspicious conch-shell India, hitherto in slumber, to lead us back to the path of devotion pursued by the sages. This is no speculation or fancy, or

midsummer night's dream. It is a real fact. It is not strange that the same country and the same race which produced Sri Chaitanya, the incarnation of love, Sri Sri Ramkrishna, who embodied a perfect blending of the cults of work, knowledge and devotion and Swami Vivekananda, the modern re-incarnation of Shankaracharya, who infused the new spirit in modern India, should claim such a lover of mankind, a friend of the poor and a servant of the miserable as Charuchandra ; but who can deny that the noble example of such a life is the greatest need of the present age of materialism.

On behalf of all lovers of Bengli literature, I congratulate and thank my Sannyasi friend, the highly esteemed Swami Narottamananda, for the portrait of the noble life of the great sage drawn by him so graphically and with so great a success.

SHIVALA, BENARES
Bhadra 30, 1337

Sri Pramatha Nath Tarkabhusan.

INTRODUCTION

The poet says that God created music to charm Himself. The devotee says that God created love to make Himself accessible to all. The culmination of love is service.

We find in the Vedas that the venerable sages of yore were first struck with wonder and awe at the indescribable immensity and beauty of the universe which gave rise to several problems, mainly "Whence came this unlimited universe ? What were they themselves ? What was their relation with the world ?"

By contemplation and rigid abstraction they realised that the created universe is the manifestation of a great energy endowed with Consciousness and Bliss (चिदानन्द). Everything, the living and the non-living, the great and the small, emanated from that Great Mother, whose children they all were. This discovery filled their hearts with indescribable joy and universal love. The attraction towards this beginningless, endless, eternal Mahasakti is Love.

The philosopher and the scientist alike have been repeating in different ways the same truth that Love reigns supreme everywhere in the molecules and atoms of the so-called non-living, as well as in the highly evolved heart of the human being.

Philosophy ultimately proclaims that Love is God. Science has been recording this Love, this attraction on every page of its history, which has not yet neared completion. Literature is laying by a store of the pleasant smiles of Love side by side with the tears shed by the same.

In the immense concourse of man in this world there is none who is not busy with one's ownself. The incessant struggle with the environment for self-aggrandizement is every moment diminishing the spiritual asset of man ; in all ages and in all countries, in the lonely hut of the poor as well as in the stately hall of the rich, man has been hankering after, like a beggar, something beyond the fulfilment of all worldly desires. Wealth has not given him happiness, honour has not given him peace, and no object of desire has cooled his heart. He aspires to something above the self and derives strength from it. India is famed from ancient times for her spirit of renunciation and dispassion. Has not a manifestation of this spirit however small been present in this world at all times and in all countries to inspire man to sacrifice his dearest possessions for relieving the distress of the poor ? The universe itself rests on this basic emotion of love.* In weal and woe, consciously or unconsciously man has been sacrificing his all at the altar of Love, the all pervading attribute of Mahashakti. In fact love of man, be it in the form of respect, sympathy, kindness, attachment

or renunciation, finds expression in service to the object of love.

It appears to us that Service is the concrete form of Love. If one respects another, he shows respect to him through service. He who loves another shows his love by serving the object of Love. Love reaches perfection through service only.

The spirit of service lies latent in the love felt by the mother for the child, in the fraternal love of two brothers walking hand in hand and in the mutual delight of two friends embracing each other. Thus in the family, and in the circle of relations, friends and acquaintances, where there is love in any form, there is with it a desire to please, help and relieve the misery or distress of the objects of love. On the other hand, when a man feels sympathy for a stranger or alien in distress and is inclined to render him aid, the sphere of service is widened with a consequent expansion of love. Through service extends love, whose expansion brings home to man the fact that his individual self is only an infinitesimal fraction of the Greatest of the Great (महतो महीयान्), that he is a member of the Empire of Light, and that he is one with every thing in the visible universe. The success of man's life is to be measured in terms of the opportunities for service which he can avail of. The soul of the love-intoxicated individual exclaims:—"Where am 'I' and where art 'Thou'? Thou art all. 'Thou' includest 'I'. In Thee lies my salvation, oh Thou

Unlimited Abode of Bliss !" Such flow of emotion, like the holy stream of the Ganges, has sanctified man and filled his soul with bliss in all ages.

Who, besides Himself or one specially favoured by Him, knows in what minute cause or seed is hid the future fulfilment of what desire of His ? How could we know with what unknown motive of the creator of the universe, He is manifesting Himself in everything from the straw to the high mountain, from the minute spark of fire to the infinite ball of heat and light placed at an infinite distance from us ?

No one can know besides God at what auspicious moment a mother- of- pearl swallows a raindrop under the influence of the star Swati, to transmute it into a beautiful pearl.

I

RESCUED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH

Long before the Lord of Light peeps above the horizon and stretches his touch to lift the curtain of nocturnal darkness, revealing the splendour, material and spiritual, of the holiest of the holy cities of the Hindus, its inhabitants come out in large numbers from the many streets and lanes bound to the temple or to the sacred stream for ablutions.

Moving along with the worshippers are to be found the poor in rags, the blind with their staff, the lame on their crutches, all wending to the temples to have their daily sight of the deity and receive charity from devout hands.

That morning with which we are concerned was no exception to the usual practice. Hundreds of devotees, rich and poor, men and women, young and old, learned and illiterate, were swarming to the different temples in joyous spirit singing the praise of Him whose golden temple was the centre of attraction. The chiming of bells in some nearby temples, the singing of devotional songs by the worshippers, and the sweet and melodious strains of the flageolet playing the early morning airs of the "Bhairab Rag" at the shrines, at the hour of the morning worship, mingled together into a symphony sublime, which

spreading in widening spheres, sanctified everything within reach.

In this joyous melody was drowned a feeble but piteous cry from a human creature who lay in the jaws of death in one of the dingy and lonely lanes. The voice was too feeble to make any impression on the ears of the few who happened to pass by.

This was only one instance of the countless pathetic cries of pain and anguish which broke forth from the hearts of suffering humanity and died away, unheeded, in the silence of infinite space.

The sound became more and more feeble and would certainly have been lost in the dark loneliness of the lane, had it not, rising above all the swell of the sacred music of the morning worship, reached the throne of mercy and been heard by the Lord of the Universe, Viswanath Himself.

Who could gauge at that moment the divine potentiality of the seed of mercy, sown by Him, like the imperishable banyan seed, taking root even on stony soil destined to grow into a gigantic tree, giving shelter to thousands like the decrepit woman whose groans had moved the Lord.

The divine hand was visible in the accidental appearance of a kind-hearted youth on the scene at the proper moment ! But for a far reaching divine purpose, how could that fast sinking groan make any impression on the ear and gather strength to penetrate into the youth's heart to melt it ?

The youth carefully removed her from the heap of dirt, cleaned her body with his own cloth and squatted on the floor of the lane with the dying woman on his lap.

This happened in a lane in Bengalitola near the Satra[1] of the Maharani of Puntia. Day had not properly dawned, the door of the Satra had not been opened ; quiet prevailed around the youth.

The caress of kindness gave the old woman some strength and she said with great difficulty ; "I have not taken anything for four days, oh my son, give me some boiled rice."

The youth found himself in a difficult situation ; for he was going that morning, the thirteenth day of June 1900, to take his bath in the Ganges. He thought . "If I fail to give her some food and medicine soon, I shall not be able to save her. I find nobody here. Alas, I myself am penniless and depend solely on charity."

For a long while the youth, Jaminiranjan, looked at the old woman's face, while his mind was full of thought. One or two persons passed that way but either did not take any notice of them, or thinking the woman dead and the youth to be her relative, they avoided them because of the filthy condition in which they were found.

1. A sort of temple .to which is attached an institution for feeding the Brahmans out of the cooked food dedicated to the God or Goddess in the temple.

An idea flashed into his mind. He carefully laid her down again as best as he could and darted forward. No vehicle could have carried him more swiftly to the Dasaswamedh ghat. Panting for breath he addressed the first gentleman he met : "Sir, I beg of you a four-anna piece." The gentleman was astonished at the unexpected behaviour of a fair-complexioned, lovely youth, whose personality belied his behaviour as a street-beggar ; but the next moment he put on the stretched palm of the youth a four-anna silver piece which sparkled in sunshine like gold—nay some celestial jewel whose value is beyond human computation.

The sun just rose above the horizon to bless this sacred union of two hearts, one charitable and the other merciful. Time was passing ; there was no delay to express thanks. Jaminiranjan hurried back, the gentleman went away, both together sowing a seed which has since grown into a gigantic tree with promise to expand further to include the whole of India under its foliage.

With the money Jamini bought some milk and "halua" in the way and hurried to the spot where he had left the woman. He fed her with some difficulty and carried her carefully to a platform attached to a house.

Food, nursing and the touch of the pleasant morning breeze revived the old woman. The world which was receding from her a few minutes ago, began to be restored to her. She opened her eyes

and looked brighter. Jaminiranjan heaved a sigh of relief.

The day advanced. She uttered a few words in a feeble voice. Jaminiranjan could perceive that the main cause of her weakness was starvation. He therefore went to his freind Haridas who lived nearest, and brought some boiled rice aad curry for her. He fed her. Rice revived her all the more and she began to relate her sad history to the youth, her saviour. The purport is this :

This lady had left her home, an interior village in the district of Jessore, about a month before, with Rs. 108 only to pass her remaining days in the sacred city of Benares. She took shelter in the house of a Brahman at Tripurabhairabi. Owing to irregularities in diet and other causes she was soon laid up with dysentery. For want of proper treatment and care the condition of the patient became worse. The owner of the house, perhaps counting on her early death, proposed to her that she should hand over her money, utensils and other things to him and he would in return arrange for her treatment and nursing. This was done. Having accomplished his object the Brahman further became a victim of greed and fear. Greed prompted him to swallow the money but fear pointed out the possibility of police persecution for her belongings after her death. He at last invented a plan which satisfied his greed and provided against police interference. The cruel Brahman carried the lady,

who was conscious but too weak to utter a protest, and left her alone at the bank of the Ganges !

Extreme weakness coupled with this sudden calamity stupefied the lady who became unconscious. She did not know what happened next.

Then she opened her eyes, there was the vast sky studded with stars; wind was blowing from all sides; she did not know where she was; only at times a sweet rippling sound was heard. She felt quite exhausted; there was great pain all over the body; her mental state was indescribable ! There was no one near her, nor had she the strength to call for help. At this junction of life and death the rippling sound of the sacred stream seemed to her to utter, "You are alive !"

At the sacred bank of the Ganges in a lonely and out-of-the-way corner, nothing but the kindness of Mrityunjaya[1], the Conqueror of Death, struggled with certain death and kept her alive, moment after moment, hour after hour, and day after day, until four days passed without any body taking care of the unfortunate lady; but on the other hand no creature did any harm to her. In her utter helplessness, overpowered with hunger, thirst and pangs of illness, she made a supreme effort to get some help from the inhabitants and crawled with great difficulty into the lane and reached the spot where she sank into unconsciousness and was

A name of Shiva.

subsequently picked up by the benevolent youth.

Having told her tale so far the old lady burst into tears which drew from the hearer also drops of pearl more precious than those that adorn royal diadems.

II

THE SEED IS SOWN

Having consoled the old lady, Jaminiranjan went to his own patron, Charuchandra, who was astonished to hear what had happened. He remained silent for sometime and then said : "At this sacred place, a horrible current of vice is flowing side by side with the stream of virtue." Perhaps he was thinking that at last God had sent to him a pioneer to lead him to the goal of his life ; he was forming some resolution in his mind.

Soon this news spread among their friends, who assembled at Charuchandra's place and started in a body to see the old woman ; they resolved to render as much help to her as possible. Having decided that, for the time being, it was expedient to get her admitted to a hospital, they approached the doctor of one at Bhelupura with a request to take her as an indoor patient. The doctor expressed his hearty sympathy with this praiseworthy act of the youths and said : "I am sorry I am unable to admit her, according to rules, without sufficient money to cover her boarding expenses ; I am helpless in the matter. But if you can deposit the same I shall be glad to take her in."

The youths had no money with them. They returned with some medicines for her. They were very sorry because their efforts that day to find a shelter for her were fruitless. The best that could be done, under the circumstances, was to remove her for that night to some better place, which they at last discovered in the outer corridor of a deserted house. There was no fear there of exposure to the sun. They carried her there and fed and nursed her till late in the night.

Early next morning, when the music at the temples and psalms and chantings of the devotees on their way to them were waking up the sacred city, and the advent of light from the east was revealing the diversity in nature hitherto merged in nocturnal darkness, Jaminiranjan was found near the old woman. He discovered that a shower at night had wetted her cloth which had been soiled too. He wrapped round her a piece of cloth belonging to him and took away her cloth for a wash. Having placed her as comfortably as possible, he went away in search of food for her.

Failing to get anything for her, he went to Puntia Satra, where he used to get his own meal as charity, and asked the manager's permission to take away his share. As the custom of those charitable institutions is to distribute the food, after dedicating it to the deity, among those who assemble and take it in the courtyard, the manager did not agree. The youth, however, pointed out

that he would not take it himself that day but give it to some one more helpless and needy. This evoked some taunts from the manager, who had ultimately to yield to the pressure of argument and earnestness, and his share was allowed to be taken out of the premises. At about 11 A. M. Jaminiranjan fed the woman.

He then went to Charuchandra's place and informed him of all that had happened. Charuchandra said:—"Thus you have had to forgo your own meal; please take your meal with us to-day and accompany me to see Kedar Babu who has come from Calcutta this morning."

In the afternoon Kedarnath himself came to see Charu Babu and was deeply impressed with what he heard from Jaminiranjan about the helpless woman, and in it he found a ray of hope that Providence was planning the fulfilment of the message of Swami Vivekananda brought to them by Swami Kalyanananda.

Returning to the woman Jaminiranjan and Kedarnath did not find her at the spot where she had been left. After some search she was found under a platform in an adjoining lane. Just then Charuchandra and Harinath joined them. It was found expedient to hire some room for permanent shelter, without which it would be impossible to save her. They at once acted upon this decision and two of them went to Pandit Govinda Chandra Vachaspati to ask him if he would let out a room in his house

for the purpose. The Pandit said : 'You ought to inform the police first ; because in case of her death the police will hold you responsible for her belongings.'

This discouraged them a little, but Harinath and Jaminiranjan went to the Dasaswamedh Police Station and related the whole story to the Sub-Inspector, who, in a light mood, advised : 'Let her remain where she is ; if you hire a room for her, you do it at your risk !'

This upset their plan; they returned to the old woman and gave her medicine and some diet and kept her there temporarily. They met at Kedarnath's place.

At about 5–30 in the afternoon, Jaminiranjan returned and found the cloth and the body of the old patient in a hopelessly soiled condition. He felt very miserable and requested the passers-by to assist him in cleansing her. This but repelled them all the more. It is impossible to do anything unaided.

Aid arrived in the shape of a kind-hearted young virgin, who appeared as mother Annapurna[1] hugging her own child, when the girl, regardless of the loathsome condition of the patient supported her and asked Jaminiranjan in a sweet and sympathetic tone to fetch some water! This was promptly complied with by Jaminiranjan, who was overjoyed at this

1. Wife of Viswanath (Lord of the Universe).

unexpected and wonderful behaviour of the girl, who seemed to be an expert in nursing. With such help it did not take much time for him to cleanse her properly and take her to the Dharmashala[1] at Pandeyghat. With rapt attention the girl heard the account of the patient given by Jaminiranjan. The girl volunteered to fetch water for her, attend her occasionally and supply her with the evening meal. She handed over to Jaminiranjan $4\frac{3}{4}$ annas for her, a part of which was spent that evening on milk and sweets for the old woman. This wonderful girl was never seen afterwards.

In this way a week passed without any sign of improvement in the illness of the patient. The youths again decided to admit her to the hospital.

In the meantime some of the youths of the fraternity while collecting old cloth, articles of food and some money by begging from door to door, saw Pandit Sivananda Bhattacharya to whom the thing was briefly related. The kind-hearted Pandit advised the youths to take her to some hospital. They explained the difficulty regarding the money that had to be deposited. The Pandit gave them a rupee and thanked them for their good work.

The patient was carried to the Bhelupura Hospital in a 'duli'[2] which cost annas eight and the remaining eight annas was paid for diet that day.

1. An inn in which lodging is given free to travellers.
2. An inferior kind of litter.

They promised that they would themselves take the responsibility of nursing and supplying diet to the patient; and in case they failed to supply the latter, they would pay for it.

This was a nice arrangement which worked quite well ; the youths like so many near relations of her devoted themselves to the duty of attending on and nursing the patient. The name of this old woman was Nrityakali Dasi.

In this immemorial city of incomparable holiness, this Garden of Bliss, in which has blown from age to age many flowers of unapproachable beauty and rare spiritual aroma, was sown on that memorable day a new seed which was in time to sprout, blossom in the hearts of generous youths, flowers of wonderful fragrance for the worship of the Lord Shiva as manifested in every created being.

III

CHARUCHANDRA'S EARLY LIFE

At a propitious moment in his early youth, the idea of dedicating his life to meditation in seclusion dawned upon Charuchandra. He could not confine this inward craving to himself and was eagerly arranging for the fulfilment of his pious desire with his friends like Sachindranath and Manmathanath.

The perusal of Bhagavan Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva's ambrosial discourses and Swami Vivekananda's impressive orations advocating sacrifice and renunciation touched the strings of his heart already tuned similarly.

One day Charuchandra heard this new gospel from the lips of Srimat Swami Vivekananda himself. A light was instantly kindled in his heart, which not only removed from it the darkness of ignorance, doubt, misery and helplessness, but also spread around him to illumine the hearts of his dear friends. Charuchandra was the first to carry to Benares this new spirit along with the portrait of Bhagavan Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhamsa Deva represented as steeped in deep meditation.

In the beginning of the year 1892 A. D. Charuchandra was a student of the Ripon College, Calcutta, reading in the Second Year Class. He felt that the

wage-earning education was useless for him. He left College and began to associate with saints and pass his days in hearing religious discourses.

Every Tuesday he made a pilgrimage to the temple of Sri Sri Bhabatarini at Dakshineswar, the most sacred religious centre of modern India, to have a sight of Mother Bhabatarini and take part in the talks about the teachings of Sri Sri Ramkrishna. Whenever possible he attended the thoughtful lectures of Mahatma Ramchandra, a disciple of Sri Sri Ramkrishna. He with his friends took much delight in them.

A similar spiritual centre grew up in the very heart of the busy city of Calcutta, at the residence of Mahatma Vijay Krishna Goswami, a saint of the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhamsa type.

Every day Srimadbhagabat was read here and psalms were sung. This was another resort where Charuchandra was often found taking much interest and delight in these religious activities.

These anti-worldly tendencies attracted the attention of his parents, who tried to bring him back to a worldly life by marrying him. But he expressed such a strong dislike for the proposal that it was never repeated to him by his parents and relations. At last they employed him as a clerk to Messrs. Soinha and Chandra (Solicitors). He liked it because it secured his independence. He hired a room in a house near his father's and began to live there separately to avoid the inevitable dis-

turbance to his meditations in the midst of a big family; but he used to take his meals with his mother. He attended office from 10 A.M to 4 P. M. and devoted the morning and evening hours to religious contemplation. Some part of the night was spent pleasantly in reading religious books and talks on them with his friends. Thus passed the year 1894.

In 1895 he went with one or two intimate friends on a pilgrimage to Benares, Hardwar, Badrinath and other sacred places and returned to Calcutta highly pleased with the long tour.

Thus passed a few more years. In 1897 the victorious Swami Vivekananda, having conquered the heart of the civilized world, came to Calcutta for the first time. It was he who had opened the gate of the Religious Kingdom of India for the occidental, civilized nations, from which people of religious fervour were attracted towards it. Charuchandra's heart leaped with joy and he was one in the great concourse that assembled to welcome the Swami at the Station.

It was one of the happiest moments of his life when he, with others, removed the horses from Swamiji's carriage and drew it themselves. It occurred to him that he was really pulling the chariot of Jagannath, the Lord of the World. The sight of Swamiji and the hearing of his inspiring lecture, followed by his visit to the Alambazar Temple, the next day, when he received Swamiji's favour and

blessings, brought him nearer to his ideal than he could imagine at that moment. Gradually he began to feel the necessity of changing the field of his activity. The more his service at the attorney's office bound him to the worldly life the more his soul strove for emancipation. The heavy burden of office work could not prevent him from devoting his leisure to religious pursuits.

About that time the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Temple and Mission were established at Belur on the bank of the Ganges opposite to Baranagore. The new light of salvation that dawned on India brought into existence this spiritual centre for the resort of the devotees.

Charuchandra and his friend Sachindranath were attracted to this newly started religious centre, which aimed at putting the teachings of Lord Ramkrishna into practice. Charuchandra was highly impressed. His visits to this Shrine earned for him more and more spiritual assets. He was fast advancing in the path of renunciation and dispassion. At that time he was about 23 or 24 years old.

Charuchandra was the fourth son of Srijut Shyama Shanker Dass, a resident of the small town of Ichapur in the district of 24 Parganas. His father lived at 31 Musalmanpara Lane. He had five sons, of whom Charuchandra was the fourth.

In 1898 Shyama Shanker, with his wife, started for Benares to pass the remaining days of his life

there. Charuchandra siezed this golden opportunity, resigned his post at the attorney office without consulting anybody, took his favourite books and his treasure, the portrait of his patron deity, Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva, and accompanied his parents to Benares to serve them in their old age.

IV

CHARUCHANDRA'S LIFE AT BENARES

The life at Benares quite suited Charuchandra's temperament. He rose early and spent the first part of the morning in worship and meditation after which he attended to his parents' requirements and went to the Ganges for a bath. He used to return home after visiting some temples and hurried after taking his meal to Mr. Shivaprasanna Moitra's school where he worked as an honorary teacher. In the evening he used to frequent the temples situated on the bank of the Ganges, abodes of monks and other religious places, taking a keen interest in the history of the temples and the life and teachings of great men, thus gaining experience from everything he saw and heard.

One day he suddenly met Swami Suddhananda of the Ramkrishna Mission, who had just returned from a pilgrimage to Manas Sarobar, while begging alms (भिक्षा). Charuchandra paid his respects to the Swami and addressed him, but the Swami was astonished at the familiarity of an unknown person. He said : "Sir, I do not recognise you." Charuchandra replied : "Before you renounced the world, you had once kindly come to my humble cottage at Panchu Khansama Lane, Baithakkhana Road, Calcutta, with Kshirode Babu."

The Swami praising his memory said: "Quite so. One evening Kshirode Babu, a devotee of Lord Ramkrishna, took me to a devotee's place where I found you absorbed in meditation before the Lord's portrait. At the noise of our footsteps you welcomed us and after dedicating the sweets sent by your mother to the Deity entertained us with the same as well as with your sweet talk. I am surprised to find that you still remember me after such a long time."

The conversation continued as they walked on to their mutual pleasure till they parted for the time being,the Swami informing Charuchandra that he was putting up with the revered Swami Niranjanananda at Banshi Dutta's house at Sonarpura, where Charuchandra saw him that very evening and repeated his calls almost every day.

Suddhanandaji fell ill which afforded Charuchandra an opportunity to serve this monk with great care and arrange for his medicine and diet. There being no improvement Swami Niranjanananda wanted to send him to some healthy place. As no arrangement could be made and as Swami Saradanandaji repeatedly wanted him back to Calcutta, he went there in 1898.

A fortnightly magazine named 'Udbodhan' first appeared from the Ramkrishna Math in January, 1899. Charuchandra received a few sample copies with a request from Swami Suddhananda to enlist subscribers for 'Udbodhan' the mouth-piece of the Ramkrishna Mission. Charuchandra began canvass-

ing in earnest. This brought him in contact with the pure-hearted and religiously disposed youth, Harinath whose intimate friend was Kedarnath, who had a small library at his place. Harinath requested him to subscribe for the magazine, a copy of the first issue of which he handed over to him for the library. Kedarnath after going through the preface by Swamiji told Harinath that he would not subscribe to it, as the style was laboured and there was nothing in it. Harinath returned the copy to Charuchandra and reported to him what Kedarnath had said. Charuchandra roared like a lion saying, "What, is Swamiji's style laboured? Does not the magazine contain anything? He who says so does not know how to read. I would like to see the gentleman and read it to him myself." The easy-going and good natured youth, Harinath found himself in a difficult situation; but at last he yielded and introduced Charuchandra to Kedarnath.

Kedarnath was then a well-built, celibate young apprentice in the police department, aspiring to the exalted position of the city prefect of police mounted in uniform, with a sword hanging from the girdle, going about the city, preserving order and assuring protection to the innocent and punishment to the offenders.

The tiny figure of Charuchandra made very little impression at the first meeting, which was very short and in which Kedarnath simply requested him to come the next evening.



evening to have the benefit of a discourse on the life and sayings of Lord Ramkrishna. The proposal was gladly accepted and acted upon. On the appointed evening all the members were busy making arrangements for a suitable reception. A portrait of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva was wanting, and Kedarnath did not know where to find one. Charuchandra said : "You need not worry about it ; Thakur has already come to Benares on my back, referring to the portrait he had brought with him. This remark excited laughter, but nobody including Charuchandra knew at that moment what a great truth had been uttered unconsciously. The portrait was brought. Charuchandra with one or two others went to bring the Swami, and Bhaktaraj* (king of devotees) went to fetch flowers and garlands, while Baba Kedar (Father Kedar) or Babaji remained at home. He lighted the lamp and was going to put incense on the fire, when suddenly the portrait of Sri Sri Ramkrishna attracted his eyes and captivated his heart. He stood motionless. The fire in the pot was reducing the cinders to ashes ; the sight of the Lord kindled the fire of dispassion in his heart, burning all worldly desires. He felt that the Lord was his nearest relation and the dearest friend. With the purest of emotions he fell prostrate at the feet of the portrait. He got up and kneeled down with folded palms.

Name given to Harinath by Charuchandra.

At this moment entered the Swami followed by Charuchandra and others. Kedarnath received him with great respect and cordiality, and Bhaktaraj arrived just in time to garland him and the portrait. An interesting and illuminating talk followed on the wonderful life and teachings of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva. It gave them peace of mind, a peep into the Lord's deep spirit of harmony.

The birth day of Sri Sri Ramkrishna drew near, and it was duly celebrated at Kedarnath's place in which Swami Niranjanananda officiated as priest at the worship of the Lord. Thus Thakur, coming on Charuchandra's shoulders, duly installed himself at Kedarnath's place after receiving worship at the hands of his own dear disciple.

Sometime after this Kalyanandaji, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, arrived at Benares as a guest of Kedarnath.

It was he who brought this message of Swamiji, namely, (आत्मनः मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च) for self emancipation and benefit of the world, to this circle of young men, and inspired them to adopt service as the aim of life. Kedarnath could not fully understand how ज्ञान (Knowledge), भक्ति (Emotion of devotion) and कर्म (Action) could be united. At times he gave the first place to devotion and practised religious rites, worship of images of the Diety etc. ; but when he turned towards action this tendency slackened. However, between knowledge and emotion on one side and action on the other, this young trio lived a

peaceful and pleasant life steadily drifting towards the unknown goal.

Whatever cloud of doubt and ignorance obstructed their vision and deprived them of a sight of the path that lay before them, was dispelled by the moonlight shed in profusion by Swami Vivekananda's Jnanayoga,

Thus the life vessels of these three heavenly souls, which had already set sail, received favoured wind all along, and the least impulse accelerated the speed beyond all calculation. Kedarnath was ahead of others in the path of dispassion and renunciation. Charuchandra observed him closely, and one day said to him : "Why do you delay further ? This is the time for coming out." Kedarnath understood the hint but said : "Where to go ?" "Niranjanandaji is at Hardwar now. You may go and live with him for some time. I can get you his consent through letter." Kedarnath agreed ; but the difficulty was about his fond old grand-father, Babu Ramchandra Moulik, and his father Shambhu Chandra Moulik, both of whom were careful not to part with him for a moment. If they knew anything about the idea of renouncing the world, entertained by their only heir and representative of the family, they would spare nobody connected with the project.

Charuchandra's intellect was sharp enough to overcome this difficulty. He had several post-cards written by Kedarnath addressed to his grand-father, as if he wrote them from Calcutta at reasonable

intervals, informing him about his activities in regard to securing a job for himself.

These sham cards were sent to Charuchandra's friend Sachindranath, who dropped them as instructed. Kedarnath left the portrait of Sri Sri Ramkrishna with Charuchandra, and, having dropped a card to inform his grand-father that he was going to Calcutta in search of employment, started for Hardwar towards the end of the year 1899.

After a few days an enthusiastic, youthful student of a religious turn of mind came to Benares with a letter of introduction to Charuchandra from his friend Sachindranath. He lived at Charuchandra's place and took his meal at a Satra. His energy, optimism and magnanimity were unbounded. We saw in a previous chapter how this kind soul saved a woman in her utter helplessness.

In February, 1900, Kedarnath came down to Calcutta from Hardwar; he proceeded to see the home of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva at Kamarpukur and thence to pay his respect to the Mother at Jairambati.

During his absence the association of friends was removed to Harinath's place, where it began to develop into a small but stable institution under the able guidance of Charuchandra. The object of each member was to find out ways and means by which God could be realised and approached. The eagerness with which they worked was exemplary.

V

THE SPARK THAT KINDLED THE FIRE

Emotion and Volition (which leads to Action) are like day and night different aspects of the same phenomenon. They are concomitants of the mind and the one is directly influenced by the other, though at a particular moment one may appear to be more prominent. Naturally they are inseparably connected and follow each other.

Though they had already grasped the idea that God is realisable both through Emotion and Action, yet the ultimate identity of these two was not clear. At this opportune moment this little club undertook the study of Swamiji's Karmayoga. Nobody excelled Charuchandra in the art of reading and the ability in the exposition of the text. His reading truly represented the force of the style, and his exposition was convincing. The hitherto unsolved problems in connection with their knowledge of spiritual matters found easy solutions.

The current of human life, like the unseen current of air, while passing through the world or Karmakshetra (field of action) comes across many a flower of emotion in full bloom, which can be plucked and placed at the feet of the Creator. But alas, man unconsciously loses hundreds of such opportunities every day.

In the afternoon of June 12, 1900, Charuchandra opened the copy of 'Udbodhan' just received, and in the contents he read "Sakhar prati" (To the friend), a peom by Swami Vivekananda. Eagerly he opened at the page and the last couplet caught his eyes first :

Round thee in forms diverse, why this vain quest ?
Loving creatures all learn to serve him best.

This brought a revolution in his ideas of devotion. He repeated it several times before reading the following :

The same Loving Soul fills life great or small ;
At their feet dear friend, do lay thy life and all.

Charuchandra's hair stood on end and this ardent call of the Swami touched his innermost heart. He read further ;

Rituals, ceremonies, self-control, opinions, philosophy and science,
Enjoyment, renunciation—all intellectual flaws ;
Love, Love is all.

Charuchandra was startled ! He was quite convinced that it is the eternal truth. He thought : "Whatever I do, I do for myself. To stuff the self with everything available is to overload it. Real devotion consists in looking upon and serving all creatures as Himself. This is life's real treasure ; this is the best way to approach Him. At last he found the path that lay before him.

The sun had set. Charuchandra could not keep this new spirit confined within himself any longer. He entered into Jamini's room and found him telling his beads. Charuchandra waited for some time with difficulty but ultimately called him. There was no response. Charuchandra was greatly agitated. He exclaimed : "What nonsense are you doing with the beads? Lend an ear to what Swamiji says."

Jaminiranjan with a sort of discomfiture approached Charuchandra who said : "A better path than telling beads lies before us. Here is Swamiji's extract of Vedantism. These poor, diseased, hungry and forlorn human beings that we see around us, are our God—our Narayan—our Shiva !"

The copy of the 'Udbodhan' was still in his hand. It appeared to the friends that God in the form of some poor diseased and homeless person was awaiting their service in some corner of the great city. They thought that it was their first duty to find him out in that form. They remained lost in such a reverie for some time, after which a conversation ensued dealing with the poem and several virtues of its author and his work in the field of service.

Charuchandra with his natural thoughtfulness explained to Jaminiranjan thus : "Swamiji says that God pervades all creatures in this universe. To bring to man this aspect of God is the main aim of all religious efforts and all actions. Swamiji

to-day wants us to understand clearly that to be inspired with this spirit and work accordingly is the highest achievement and duty of man."

These words instilled Swamiji's spirit into every nerve of Jaminiranjan whose feelings at that moment were not much different from those of the author.

Charuchandra left the room ; Jaminiranjan retired to bed with a heart deeply moved ; neither of them knew that they had at that moment stepped into a path which brings the Kingdom of Heaven within easy reach !

Only Viswanath knows if Jaminiranjan could get a sound sleep that night or passed it half-awake ; but what we know is that Jaminiranjan was found nursing the half-dead old woman on the morning that followed that emotional night !

VI

A LIFE RISKED TO SAVE ANOTHER

In the early morning of the sixteenth day of June in the year 1900, a youth was standing on the open platform adjacent to the temple of Shitala Devi, absorbed in some thought. The bathing ghat presented the usual spectacle—some people were bathing, others worshipping idols with the flowers with which the ripples of the sacred stream played ; the rays of the rising sun gilded the floral waves which enticed some boys who were swimming much beyond the usual limit.

Suddenly a number of old ladies on the bank, addressing the keeper of the bathing ghat, cried : "Another boy is just going to be drowned to-day !" This startled the youth who at once ran to the ladies and asked them what the matter was. "There, there the boy is struggling for life!" Jaminiranjan looked at the direction pointed by a lady and found a hand raised above the surface. The next moment Jaminiranjan plunged into the stream and swam fast towards the spot.

There was heard a shout of joy when Jaminiranjan lifted the boy above the surface. A new calamity befell him. His dhoti (piece of cloth worn by him), which had not been tightened properly

before leaping into the stream, got loose enough to entangle his legs by this time and thus endangered his own life. Jaminiranjan did not lose his presence of mind. With a convulsive effort he held the boy up with one hand and with the other set the legs free.

The onlookers on the bank, mostly old ladies, had already given up both for lost, attributing the catastrophe to fate and will of God. They were either too much bewildered or too much under the yoke of fatalism to think of sending even a boat for their rescue.

While the spectators were standing on the bank not knowing what to do, God gave heavenly strength to the selfless youth who slowly proceeded towards the bank. The boy had just become senseless while there was still some distance to be covered. Jamini placed the boy on the chest and floated his own body on the back and came nearer the bank with the current. When he felt the first stone step his dhoti had been washed away. The crowd shouted with joy and praised Jaminiranjan's courage and self-sacrifice.

With some difficulty could he impress upon those present the necessity of supplying him with something to wrap round his loin. Some one promptly threw a napkin which served the purpose. Jamini rendered first aid to the boy and he was brought to his senses. The boy's relations arrived on the scene at this moment, to whom the boy was restored.

Jaminiranjan was greatly fatigued but he was very glad at heart and was anxious to share the joy with Charuchandra, his intimate friend and benefactor, for which he started at once without taking any rest.

Charuchandra perhaps perceived the merciful hand of God behind the wonderful incident ; he did not utter a word but bound Jaminiranjan in a close embrace.

Jaminiranjan's example of self-sacrifice strengthened the belief of his friends in the principle—"For the good of the many, for the good of all," and they began to practise it to the best of their power and ability.

Jaminiranjan's health had been indifferent for some time before the incident after which his health declined still further.

VII

BENARES AS IT THEN WAS

After a few weeks' stay, Nrityakali had recovered completely and come out of the hospital. The small group of friends initiated into the Religion of Service gained immense psychic strength at the signal success of these two cases. The whole of the sacred city appeared to them as a vast field of action. They haunted every nook and corner, every bathing ghat and temple, every street and lane in search of such persons as required their service. In doing so they spread the spirit of service throughout the length and breadth of the city which unfolded its manifold aspects to them. It will not be out of place to survey it briefly as these workers found it when they began their philanthropic career.

Benares, the religious metropolis of the Hindus, has maintained its position as the holiest of holy places throughout an unbroken period from the remotest past to the present moment. Who can enumerate the numberless saints, sages, monks, philosophers and devotees who lived, worked and adorned this Garden of Bliss, and kept the stream of Hindu culture ever-flowing? The great torch of spirituality first lighted by the Vedic seers has

been preserved here through the ages. It has been the resort of the sharpest intellects, kindest hearts and ablest hands. It has been the point of contact of different schools of thought, different beliefs, different forms of action. There is hardly any place in India, whose spiritual history is not connected with that of Benares.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Benares was as sacred in the eyes of the contemporary Hindus as it had been two millenniums ago. The great saint Trailangya Swami who had transcended all attributes and attained to the highest spiritual level was still in living memory.

The spiritual influence of Swami Bhaskarananda was being felt all over the city; and Swami Vishuddhananda was actually putting new strength and vigour into the ancient religion and spiritual culture both by his learned exposition of the texts and his life of dispassion and renunciation.

But side by side with this soul-purifying influence of the sages could be found misery and poverty oppressing a bulk of the ordinary population, specially those who came here on pilgrimage or for study.

There was a large number of permanent resident monks and saints who after renouncing the world resided in monasteries in this spiritual centre.

Then, there was a larger number of elderly retired persons from all parts of India, who had settled here to pass the remaining parts of their

lives in pious acts and attain salvation after death at Benares.

Another section of the population consisted of the students from different parts of India, who flocked to Benares to study the different branches of Sanskrit Literature and Learning. The unique feature of Sanskrit learning is free tuition to all students. In ancient times the students got boarding and lodging also free from the teacher to whom he was an inmate, a son. With greater rush of students the limited capacities of the teachers, who were householders themselves, could not cope with the demand and a very large number of poor students got relief in the shape of a midday meal at Satras.

Labourers and beggars from the different parts of India came here to earn a living ; for there is the belief among the Hindus that Mother Annapurna leaves no mouth unfed in her city.

There were permanent residents including landholders, merchants and other classes.

Of the temporary population, pilgrims formed the main bulk and could be found coming throughout the year, not in hundreds but in thousands every day.

Benares was really the Garden of Bliss up to the introduction of railway and some time after it too. But by the beginning of the twentieth century the population had increased considerably with a corresponding increase in poverty, misery and difficulties

of various sorts. Every class of the population began to be affected adversely. Of these, students, old labourers, retired old ladies depending on small stipends from their relations or small sums which they brought with them, and a number of poor pilgrims were hit the most.

The poor student could with difficulty find a shelter somewhere, food at a Satra and clothes from the charitably disposed householders ; but when he fell ill his misery was great. An old labourer unable to work any longer found himself in a very difficult situation which increased with illness.

An old retired lady whose stipend was suddenly stopped owing to some cause or other, or when the small sum brought initially was consumed, would find herself in great difficulty. Illness would render the situation still more pitiable.

The condition of the pilgrims can be imagined from the most wretched and piteous condition in which Nrityakali was picked up by Jaminiranjan and the unscrupulous callousness of some house-owners from the behaviour of her host as she related to Jaminiranjan.

The more the young band of workers wandered about in the city the more they wondered at the apparent anomaly of misery and distress lurking tenaciously, though there was no dearth of charitable institutions which existed in hundreds in the shape of hospitals, the biggest being the Iswari Memorial Hospital, asylums like the Kali Shanker

Asylum at Chouka ghat, Bhingaraj Anathalaya and others, Dharmasalas (resting houses for pilgrims), monasteries of monks, Pathsalas for students and Satras for feeding Brahmanas.

A careful observation of the prevailing conditions and a subtle analysis of the collected facts revealed to them the two main causes of the state of affairs.

1. Though the number and scope of the charitable institutions at Benares in 1900 A. D. was large enough, apparently it was not sufficient for coping with the pressing and increasing demand.

2. Though the institutions gave relief to thousands of needy souls who approached them, there was no provision for picking up those unfortunate decrepit and diseased persons who were utterly helpless and could not move.

A new chapter opened in the history of the charitable institutions of Benares, when this band of young, self-less, and enthusiastic workers took upon itself the duty of removing the second cause by supplying a link between them and the most deserving objects of pity and charity, and the first in part by starting a Home of Service later on.

VIII

SYSTEMATISATION OF SERVICE

This young group, whose character had already been profoundly influenced by the new gospel revealed by Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhamsa Deva and propounded by Swami Vivekananda, began to realise the ideal in a more concrete form.

The hungry have to be fed, the diseased have to be nursed and medically treated, the poor students should be helped, shelter should be procured for the homeless, and the wants of the poor have to be removed. With these lofty ideals the youths resolved to start more systematically by forming an association with definite aims and objects. Charuchandra's soul, Jaminiranjan's enthusiasm and Kedarnath's service formed the nucleus round which gathered the spirit of service of other friends.

Brahmachari Bibhutibhusan was the secretary of the new association; Jaminiranjan assistant secretary and Charuchandra was appointed treasurer; Kedarnath, Harinath, Haridas, Jnanendranath and Jagatdurlabh became members. Thus they laid the foundations of the temple in their heart in which Man was to be worshipped as God.

This association was established with its office at Kedarnath's place, and the trio Charuchandra,

Kedarnath and Jaminiranjan cut off all their connections with their relations and devoted themselves heart and soul to the work of the association. They searched for the needy everywhere and arranged for their relief by sending some to hospitals, giving food and clothes to others according to the necessities of different cases. To meet the expenses they begged from door to door and collected rice, old clothes and small sums of money.

About this time a patient suffering from typhoid came under their care. He was sixteen years old and was a resident of Sajanpur in the district of Faridpur. The workers were put to great difficulty owing to their inability to secure a suitable lodging for the patient. They hired a small room for him, but finding it quite unsuitable removed him to Kedarnath's place where they nursed him day and night with great care. The attention of the public was attracted to the noble work these young men were doing. Some eminent medical practitioners volunteered to see the patient without charging any fee and send medicines free. Girindranath, for it was the nameof the patient, recovered after some time and was given passage money and sent home. Girindranath was thus the first indoor patient of this newly started institution.

Owing to overwork for some time past Jaminiranjan fell ill and was confined to bed at Kedarnath's place. He himself was thus the second indoor

patient. After a few days he recovered and resumed work.

Work had commenced but the association had no separate place for carrying it on. Whatever space was available in Kedarnath's house was set apart for the purpose. Sri Sri Bhagaban Ramkrishna Deva's portrait was worshipped there regularly and service to God in the form of Man began to be rendered.

With the expansion of the field of activity an urgent necessity for a spacious and independent home was keenly felt by the members.

Different types of people sought their help; those who were forlorn and destitute, those unwilling to go to a charitable dispensary or hospital, those refused admission to the hospital as incurable etc.

At last they hired a small house on Rs. 5 per month at Jangambadi, No. D 82/32, on 13th September, 1900. The office of the association was removed there from Kedarnath's house, and a small outdoor dispensary also was opened for distributing Homœopathic medicines among outdoor patients. One of the rooms was assigned to indoor patients, a small one served as kitchen and pantry; the dispensary was used as the office and the bedroom for Charuchandra and Jaminiranjan who became wholetime workers.

Kedarnath renounced the world, hired a small house at Khemeswarghat on Rs. 3 per month and

removed the portrait of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva, which had been installed in his house by Charuchandra, to this new abode where Kedarnath worshipped the same with humble offerings and spent the greater part of his time there and slept there at night. This was really the first temple of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva at Benares. Kedarnath regularly came to the dispensary and worked there and served the patients. This attracted the notice of Rai Pramada Das Mitra Bahadur, an admirer of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva, who gave them a set of plates and other necessary things for the worship of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva.

Kedarnath, Charuchandra and Jaminiranjan were wholetime workers, the first had formally renounced the world while the other two practically did so. The other five co-workers devoted all the time at their disposal after performing their duties at home to various sorts of work of the association. Charuchandra was the head and the spine, Kedarnath and Jamini arms, and the members, the remaining parts of the association.

About this time there was a great famine at Kishengarh, a state in Rajputana ; the Ramkrishna Mission (Belur Math) opened a temporary relief centre there under the management of Swami Kalyananandaji to mitigate the suffering of the people. The Swami was short of workers and wrote to Charuchandra to send one. Kedarnath volunteered and went there in September, 1900. Mr. Sachindra

Nath Bose and Babu Manmatha Nath Mukerjee (who is at present one of the Judges of the Calcutta High Court) were Charuchandra's friends. They appreciated the work undertaken by Charuchandra at Benares and started an auxiliary committee at Calcutta with Dr. Amritalal Sircar, L. M. S., F. C. S. and Sj. Nirode Chandra Chatterji, B. L. for strengthening and helping the association at Benares. Whatever funds this committee collected were sent to Charuchandra. Thus between October and November, 1900, the main institution and its branch at Calcutta worked vigorously and stood on a fairly firm footing.

IX

THE POOR MEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION

The field of activity and responsibility of the young friends' association extended day by day. The indefatigable labour and unflinching devotion to the noble cause made the association widely popular ; it attracted the sympathy and attention of many prominent citizens, the most noteworthy among them being Dr. Manmatha Nath Bose, Rai Pramada Das Mitra Bahadur and Babu Somanath Bhaduri. The work was so much appreciated by these gentlemen that at their initiative the first general meeting of the association was held at the Bengalitola High School on the fifteenth September, 1900, at which there was a good attendance of kind-hearted gentlemen. Rai Pramada Das Mitra Bhahadur proposed a new name, 'The Poor Men's Relief Association', in place of 'Home of Relief'. This was adopted by a majority of votes. A managing committee was duly constituted and the rules and regulations of the young men's association were approved.

The seed that had been nurtured by Charuchandra's will, Jaminiranjan's enthusiasm and Kedarnath's service, grew up into a young plant. Feelings of joy and consciousness of great responsibility agi-

tated them and their friends. This new stimulus strengthened their resolution and they began to pursue the noble ideal with greater vigour. The workers were glad to declare before all that the invalid, the forlorn, the diseased and the poor were their nearest relations. They would feed the hunger-stricken, render medical aid to the poor patient whose life was in danger for want of treatment; they would nurse the patient who required nursing most; they would manage to find shelter for those miserable and helpless patients who rolled in the dust of the street; they would render all service to all the indoor patients in their hospital without any distinction of caste or creed to the best of their ability; they would save the lives of those persons of respectable families reduced to poverty, who felt the humiliation of begging too keenly to approach charitable institutions; they would go and help the blind, the invalid and old persons who were unable to go to any charitable institution.

Soon the Home of Relief was filled with various sorts of helpless human beings, whose sigh of relief was like heavenly blessing to this small band of self-less workers.

Within five months the relief work increased so much that in February, 1901, the Association had to be removed to a more spacious house, No. D 77 Dasaswamedh Road, which was rented on Rs. 12 per mensem.

This new abode also could not cope with the increasing demand and was found too small for the purpose ; on June 2, 1901, the Association occupied a bigger house, No. 38/153 Ramapura on, Rs. 10 per month. The house was big enough but was out of repairs and could be got at a cheap rent.

Thus within eighteen months no less than 330 men and 334 women received some relief or other from this Association. There were 625 Hindus and 21 Mahomedans. The whole-hearted devotion of a few workers managed the work satisfactorily.



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

X

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT BENARES

The grand reception accorded to the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda on his arrival at Calcutta from his American and European tour has already been referred to in a previous chapter.

After visiting all the important places throughout India, the great Swami arrived at Benares in February, 1902, where he was cordially received as a glorious son of India. There he became the guest at the house of Mr. Kali Krishna Thakur. Charuchandra and Harinath with a few other brother workers went to receive him at Moghalsarai; some of them were always found with Swamiji during his stay at Benares throughout day and night, as if the Poor Men's Relief Association got itself attached to Swamiji in living form. Swamiji was accompanied by Mr. Okakura, who had come from the Japanese Government and Swami Bodhananda and Swami Nirbhayananda. Swami Niranjananandaji and Swami Shivanandaji had already arrived at Benares for making preparations for Swami Vivekananda's reception.

Swamiji's sweet, simple and convincing discourses on life and its ideal, the ways and means for its attainment and other allied topics left no

shadow of doubt in the minds of these workers as to the nobleness and loftiness of the ideal which they had already begun to pursue.

In a few days Charuchandra, Harinath and Haridas were initiated by Swamiji ; his new disciples laid their hearts at his feet for being utilised for the good of all.

At that most sacred and auspicious moment of life, the Swami showed the disciples the proper path of the Brahmachari, the lover of truth, and the highest achievement of human life. He said, "Devoted service to God in the form of helpless man is the final goal of the human life, equally for the pure-hearted Brahmachari, the Karmi and the man in general."

These words left a profound, indelible and everlasting impression on the mind of the Sevakas. The great one continued : "Who are you to render relief ? Nothing beyond service is within your scope. The pride of rendering help to others goeth before a fall."

"Renouncing all egoism, banishing all desire pursue the path of truth and love ; serve man as God. Work in this spirit and you will reach the goal. Not only will you thus make the best use of your life but you will do a lot of good to your society and your country. The unity of God with all creatures will thereby be more perceptible. You have assigned an important position to mercy in your activities ; but mind, no man should be proud

enough to think that he can be merciful to another. Mercy is the prerogative of Him who is the life of all lives. Mercy flows from a high level to a lower one. How arrogant it is on the part of a man to think another lower and humbler than himself. Service and not mercy should be your guiding principle, service to man, the image of God. Karma (Action) is religion and religion is Karma. Karma leads man to God. None except God can give relief to anybody. My sons, name your institution "Home of Service."" He turned to Charuchandra and said: "Regard every pice collected for the poor as your life blood. Such noble work can be carried on properly and permanently by those only who have renounced everything."

Thus the kind teacher led his disciples to the confluence of the three streams of Cognition, Emotion and Volition, where parts merged into the whole and differences sank into union. An ablution at this sacred junction can not but purify the human soul, which emerges with clear vision to see Him everywhere.

The disciples with this fresh asset of spiritual power pursued their path of service all the more diligently.

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About this time Udai Pratap Singh, the philanthropic and pious Raja of Bhinga, was living in his garden at Durgakund as a monk (Griha Sannyasi). He had left his state and had come to reside in Benares during the remainder of his life, taking

a vow that he would never leave the garden. The Raja was very anxious to see Swami Vivekananda, but he was handicapped owing to the vow he had taken. He once thought of inviting the Swami but was not sure whether he would accept the same and care to come to his place.

At last he resolved to go and see the Swami contrary to his vow.

An old monk named Govindanandaji happened to see the Raja who told the monk all about it. The monk asked the Raja to wait until he himself saw Swamiji and explained to him the desire of the Raja to see him, and the difficulty which prevented him from doing so. The Raja agreed.

The monk went to Swamiji and told him all about the Raja. Swamiji said : "It won't be proper for him to break the vow. I shall myself go and see him".

Swamiji paid a visit to the Raja's garden the next day. The Raja was highly pleased and the conversation touched many contemporary problems like the condition of the Hindu religion, the place of Karma (Action) in Hindu philosophy and so on. The Raja folded his palms before the Swami and said : "Swamiji, in my humble estimation you belong to the same group as Buddha and Sankara ; give me your blessings." The Raja continued : "Swamiji, it would be very kind of you if you start some centre at Benares for the spread of Hindu religion and the theory of Karma (Action), which

will do much good to the public." The Raja promised to render financial aid. Swamiji, owing to ill health could not promise to take up the work himself but said : "If God wills, a centre for the spread of Vedantism will be established at Benares ; I shall be glad to request a brother disciple of mine to take up the work."

After a day or two Swamiji received a letter from the Raja with a cheque for five hundred rupees, which he presented him as his guest. Swamiji handed over the cheque and the letter to Swami Shivanandaji and said : "With this please start some work here for the spread of Vedantism." Swami Shivanandaji received what was offered but was silent.

As the birth-day ceremony of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhamsa Deva drew near, Swami Vivekananda with his fellow disciples and followers made preparations for leaving Benares for Belur Math. Before leaving Benares Swamiji, at the request of the members of the Sevashram, dictated the following appeal to the public on behalf of the Home of Service :—

THE RAMKRISHNA HOME OF SERVICE
BENARES : AN APPEAL.*

DEAR—

We beg your acceptance of the past year's Report of the Ramkrishna Home of Service, Benares,

Letter written by Swamiji to accompany the First

embodying a short statement of our humble efforts towards the amelioration, however little, of the miserable state into which a good many of our fellow-beings, generally old men and women, are cast in this city.

In these days of intellectual awakening and steadily asserting public opinion, the holy places of the Hindus, their condition, and method of work, have not escaped the keen eye of criticism ; and this city, being the holy of holies to all Hindus, has not failed to attract its full share of censure.

In other sacred places people go to purify themselves from sin, and their connection with these places is casual, and of a few days' duration. In this, the most ancient and living centre of Aryan religious activity, there come men and women, and as a rule old and decrepit, waiting to pass unto Eternal Freedom, through the greatest of all sanctifications, death under the shadow of the temple of the Lord of the Universe.

And then there are those who have renounced everything for the good of the world, and have for ever lost the helping hands of their own flesh and blood, and childhood's associations.

They too are overtaken by the common lot of humanity, physical evil in the form of disease.

Report of the Ramkrishna Home of Service, Benares, February, 1902.

It may by true that some blame attaches to the management of the place. It may be true that the priests deserve a good part of the sweeping criticism generally heaped upon them ; yet we must not forget the great truth—like people like priests. If the people stand by with folded hands and watch the swift current of misery rushing past their doors dragging men, women and children, the Sannyasin and the householder, into one common whirlpool of helpless suffering, and make not the least effort to save any from the current, only waxing eloquent at the misdoings of the priests of the holy places, not one particle of suffering can ever be lessened, not one ever be helped.

Do we want to keep up the faith of our forefathers in the efficacy of the Eternal City of Shiva towards salvation ?

If we do, we ought to be glad to see the number of those increase from year to year, who come here to die.

And blessed be the name of the Lord that the poor have this eager desire for salvation, the same as ever.

The poor who come here to die have voluntarily cut themselves off from any help they could have received in the places of their birth, and when disease overtakes them, their condition we leave to your imagination and to your conscience as a Hindu, to feel and to rectify.

Brother, does it not make you pause and think of the marvellous attraction of this wonderful place

of preparation for final rest ? Does it not strike you with a mysterious sense of awe—this age-old and never-ending stream of pilgrims marching to salvation through death ?

If it does,—come and lend us a helping hand.

Never mind if your contribution is only a mite, your help only a little ; blades of grass united into a rope will hold in confinement the maddest of elephants,—says the old proverb.

Ever yours in the Lord of the Universe,

VIVEKANANDA.

After three weeks' stay Swamiji left Benares for Belur. This was the last item of his missionary work.

About this time Sj. Kali Krishna Thakur, the famous Zemindar of Calcutta, expressed the desire to Swami Niranjananandaji to help the Home of Service in these words : "Last January I was highly pleased and impressed with the work and the ideal of this institution. I intend giving some help to it." In reply the Swami informed him that the Association badly wanted a house of their own. The charitable gentleman promised to bear the whole cost of such a house. This news was communicated to Swami Vivekananda who wrote in reply : "Sj. Kali Krishna Thakur's gift of a house, even a hut for the poor, will prove as pious an act as the installation of a thousand idols of God." This utterance of the great Swami had a salutary influence on the religiously minded Hindus, who after this rendered valuable help to the Home of Service.

XI

THE RAMKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAM

Under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda his new disciples devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the cause of service with a view to realising the truth propounded by him, namely, the identity of the Creator and the created. Along with this they devoted some time to study, worship and contemplation. They wrote to Swamiji at Belur to send to them a venerable monk like Shivanandaji to guide them in their spiritual path, for the workers had already been highly benefitted by the example set by this Swamiji who, when staying at the Home of Service for some time, used to perform even the most menial service to the patients as a common worker, and by his own example and precepts improved and maintained at a high level the spiritual life of the workers.

Acharyadeva (Swami Vivekananda), at the request of his disciples, wanted to start a centre for spreading Vedantism also, at Benares. And so agreeably to the desire of the Raja of Bhinga he sent Shivanandaji, who with Kedarnath (Swami Achalananda) arrived at the Sevashram on June 26, 1902.

Only a part of the house had a first floor containing a small room adjoining the staircase. The Swami was lodged in that room with two or three other Sevakas.

In a week a small house in a big garden at Luxa was hired on rupees ten per month for Sri Sri Ramkrishna Math. Swami Shivanandaji christened it Sri Sri Ramkrishna Advaita Ashram.

In an auspicious moment, on the fourth day of July, 1902 (20 Assar, 1309, Bengali Era), Swami Shivanandaji formally installed here the portrait of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva, which had hitherto been kept in a house at Khemeswar ghat. Swamiji, shifted to the new Math that very day, though both of them took their meals at the Sevashram. Swamiji, Kedarnath and a few others passed that night at the Advaita Ashram. They did not know why their minds were agitated that night ; their sleep was disturbed ; excessive heat and mosquitoes proved positive nuisance. Passing that night some how without a wink of sleep, Charuchandra, Kedarnath and others returned to the Sevashram in the morning, where the night's disturbed sleep was attributed to heat and mosquitoes. But no explanation could account for the heaviness of the heart and mental worry they felt even in the morning. As the day advanced it became tremendously hot ; Kedarnath did not return to the Advaita Ashram at noon, but stayed with Chruchandra at the Sevashram, where a telegram addressed to

Swami Shivanandaji was handed over to Charu-chandra by a post peon in the afternoon. He did not open it. After sunset they went to the Advaita Ashram and handed over the telegram to Swamiji, who stood thunderstruck on opening the envelope. He read : "Swami Vivekananda's mortal body was laid in eternal sleep at 9 o'clock last night."

The Swami did not believe the news at first, He said to Kedarnath and others : "I do not believe that Swami Vivekananda has breathed his last ; perhaps an enemy has sent this telegram." This was natural as the same tactis had several times been practised by his opponents. But this poor consolation could hardly relieve their sorrow and anxiety. The following morning this heart-rending news was confirmed by another telegram from Sachindranath to Charuchandra. There was no room for doubt. The Sevakas with a sorrowful heart went to the Advaita Ashram and acquainted the Swami with his confirmatory telegram. Swamiji sobbed and said : "Acharyadeva sometimes said that the work at Benares would be his last piece of work. See how his word has come true to-day. A few months ago he instilled into the hearts of his disciples at Benares the spirit of Service, and yesterday just after the establishment of the Advaita Ashram he left the world. We do not know with what purpose and for what hidden benefit for India this dire calamity has befallen us. What shall I say ? Let us all sing his praise. The

path shown by Thakur and Swamiji is the only true path not only for us, but for every son and daughter of India.

Acharya Swami Vivekanandaji, with his deep love and reverence for his preceptor and his cult of the harmony of all faiths, did not only hold him up as the living incarnation of the doctrine at home and abroad, but also opened the casket of the spiritual treasure of the Rishis before the world. He led his disciples to realise through service to man the oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme One. He preached this gospel from door to door himself as well as through his disciples. The present Ramkrishna Mission is the concrete embodiment of his conception and the practical fulfilment of his idea and spirit.

XII

THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE

Swami Vivekananda's appeal for the Sevashram acted like magic and awakened in the public a desire to render some help to this cause of self-sacrificing service. With the expansion of the Home of Service it occurred to the workers that it would be quite appropriate to connect their institution with the Ramkrishna Mission, since they all regarded the sage as their only ideal and were inspired by his disciple Swami Vivekananda to take up the work of service.

The Sevakas, therefore, moved a resolution in the Managing Committee to affiliate the Poor Men's Relief Association to the Ramkrishna Mission and change the name for 'Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service.'

There was difference of opinion. Some members unwilling to part with their power said: "Let the work of the Association go on as usual; there is no need of handing it over to the Ramkrishna Mission." The opposite party said: "An institution like this entirely depends upon workers full of the spirit of self-sacrifice and having no worldly ties, who are mostly monks of the Ramkrishna Order and disciples of Swami Vivekananda. With the growing

needs of our institution we shall be able to get a good supply of monk Sevakas from the Ramkrishna Mission, which undoubtedly will place our institution on a sounder basis and ensure its long life and good management for all time to come. Hence from all points of view the proposed affiliation will certainly be advantageous for us."

The monk Sevakas said : "This institution though named 'Poor Men's Relief Association' is not really so. It is not relief work but it is worship and devotion to God.

"We have been guided by the new light of the Lord Ramkrishna and inspired by Swami Vivekananda ; in the fitness of things this institution should be incorporated with the Ramkrishna Mission."

After much discussion the question was put to the vote which gave a majority to the opposition. Nine of the monk Sevakas tendered their resignation. The work of the Association came to a standstill for some time. After a few days a general meeting of the Association was called at the Carmichael Library on november 23, 1902, to confirm the proceedings of the Managing Committee. The meeting was attended by the patrons, donors, subscribers and members of the Association. At this meeting the proposal of the monk Sevakas for affiliation gained the support of the majority in these words ; "It would certainly be a matter of joy to get this small institution affiliated to the unique organisa-

tion, the Ramkrishna Mission in which alone lies the hope of reawakening India and spreading the pure light of Vedantism."

With acclamations of joy the motion for affiliation was carried and the management was handed over to the Ramkrishna Mission, and the name of the Association was changed to 'The Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service.'

This connection with the holy name of Lord Ramkrishna inaugurated a new religious epoch in the history of this sacred city. This success left nothing to be desired by the monk Sevakas who resumed the duty with redoubled vigour.

The Sevashram embarked on a career of improvement and expansion. The work became more systematic. The Local Managing Committee consisting of kind-hearted and well-known persons was formed by the Ramkrishna Mission ; rules and regulations which are still in force were framed for the guidance of the monk Sevakas.

The well-known philanthropic European lady, Sister Nivedita, who pursuing the ideal of renunciation and dispassion held before her by Swami Vivekananda had established the Nivedita School at Baghbazar, Calcutta, and gained the highest admiration from Indians among whom she carried on her humanitarian work, often visited the Sevashram at Benares, where she stayed and accompanied the monks for begging from door to door. She delivered several public lectures also for the

improvement of the Sevashram. Her impressive writings helped the ideals and activities of the Sevashram to be known far and wide. The Sevakas and other inmates of the Sevashram will feel that the Sister is still working with them.

XIII

THE PATIENT TURNED PHYSICIAN

So long joy and encouragement accompanied the work of the Sevakas, but now danger and discouragement stood before them. The Sevakas, however, undauntedly faced the fearful infectious diseases which made their appearance in the Sevashram. They nursed and served the patients of infectious diseases as carefully and as lovingly as those suffering from ordinary diseases.

Day by day kind-hearted youths joined the Sevakas in this noble work. Thus in this city of Mrityunjaya (Conqueror of death) mortality embraced immortality for some time. It was perhaps His will to test the sincerity of the Sevakas whose devotion to the cause was beyond question. Two of them caught the infection and sacrificed their lives for the poor patients. Even this did not deter others from attending on patients of Small Pox.

On that occasion Swami Shivanandaji, now president of Sri Sri Ṛamkrishna Math and Mission, wrote an article in the Udbodhan from which an idea about the then existing condition of the Sevashram and the dutifulness and devotion of the Sevakas may be obtained. It is reproduced below in an abridged form ;

There lived a man aged about thirty years in a village in the district of 24 Parganas. He was a lock-maker by profession. His health was utterly ruined by Malaria. Being hopeless of recovery he came to Benares where he was reduced to extreme poverty owing to the lack of any source of income.

He was too weak to move about from door to door or go to the temple of Annapurna, where each beggar can get sufficient rice for one day. But even if he got rice, there was no one to cook it for him. He had no shelter worth the name. Satras there are many, but all of them are meant for the Brahmanas. Upendra had, therefore, to live on the scanty meal that was available in a Satra after feeding the Brahmanas. Thus Upendra lived a miserable life for a few months.

A gentleman kindly advised him to seek the help of the Ramkrishna Sevashram which Upendra did. He was an outdoor patient for some time, but there was no improvement and the Sevashram admitted him as an indoor one. In about eight months he recovered completely and was quite healthy.

The manager of the Sevashram asked Upendra whether he would like to go back to his native village, and in that case the Sevashram would help him with passage money. Upendra in reply said that he did not want to go home, but would feel highly obliged if the Sevashram would kindly allow him to live there and serve other patients as he himself had been served. The offer of his

services was accepted and he began to work there with great delight. With indescribable love, enthusiasm and care did Upendra serve patients suffering from various diseases and proved to be an excellent Sevaka in a short time.

Most of the monk Sevakas of the Sevashram were Swami Vivekananda's disciples. After their work in the Sevashram they used to go to the Advaita Ashram for attending religious ceremonies, lectures etc. Upendra joined them. He became so much fond of his work that he would nurse a patient day and night. Sometimes he could not sleep at night owing to anxiety for a patient under his care. His brain was affected ; under medical advice he was relieved of his duty and put under treatment which cured him after some time.

The Sevashram collects rice from a number of houses where a handful of rice is set apart every day in the name of the poor in an earthen pot. Monks collect this rice weekly. The quantity received per month is from five to six maunds. Upendra after recovery was given this work. He with his own exertions enlisted about two hundred more houses to contribute rice, thus rendering much help to the Sevashram.

A worker of the Sevashram, caught the infection of Small Pox from an indoor patient. Upendra nursed him until recovery but himself caught the disease in his turn and ultimately sacrificed his life on Friday, the 6th of May.

All the indoor patients who had been so carefully nursed by Upendra wept bitterly at this loss. His goodness, kindness and spirit of service have left an everlasting impression on the Sevashram.

Great art thou, Upendra, since thou hast laid thy life at the Altar of Service. Salvation is within thy grip, since thou hast realised the existence of God in man, as taught by Swami Vivekananda, thou hast lived a life worth living, for thou hast felt the pinch of poverty and agony of distress and disease as a patient only to turn into an angel like physician for relieving the distress of others. May your name be remembered with respect.

XIV

CHARITY AND SERVICE JOIN HANDS

The connection with the Ramkrishna Mission brought about many changes in the Sevashram, which attracted wider and more active notice of both admirers and critics than it ever did under the management of the small band of youths who had started the noble work. Many obstacles and difficulties had to be surmounted and many calamities averted, which taxed the energy of the Sevakas to the utmost and put their sincerity and honesty to the most crucial tests. They faced all these storms like a wall of adamant, behind which lived peacefully all the poor souls under their protection, who were never allowed to share even an iota of the worry, anxiety and shock which they experienced. Here lies the signal success of the Sevakas.

Ultimately truth triumphed. Obstacles were overcome and the dark cloud of anxiety gave way to the moonlight of joy.

Owing to insufficiency of space the Sevakas in spite of several losses of lives among them had no alternative to living with the patients including those suffering from infectious diseases. They felt the urgent need for more space for the increasing number of indoor patients, for more workers, and a separate house or ward for the infectious diseases.

There was only one hospital at Chouka Ghat for infectious diseases but the arrangement of treatment and nursing was not adequate; there was no provision for the relations of the patients to live there for nursing them. To remove this want the Sevakas resolved to open a ward for the infectious diseases. Swami Brahmananda, the President of the Ramakrishna Mission, came to Benares in 1903, and advised the Sevakas to have a home of their own. The Swami with the Sevakas wandered about in search of a suitable plot of land for building a permanent home for the institution; they however did not know where the money would be found for either the purchase of the land or for the building.

That God helps those who help themselves was found to be true. Help came unexpectedly. The first to come forward with a princely donation of four thousand rupees (Rs. 4000) was Srijut Upendra Narayan Dev of Entally, Calcutta, for the purchase of the proposed plot. This was promptly followed by two thousand rupees, being the whole life savings of a generous donor Srijut Tarini Charan Paul of Kolar Bansbati, Hooghly district, who silently handed over to Charuchandra this sum of money, setting an illustrious example of charity for others.

These two generous donors supplied a sufficient amount for the purchase of a suitable piece of land, which Charuchandra could not yet find in spite of the most diligent search.

The unexpected happened. The owner of the

house, in which the Advaita Ashram was located, came to Swami Shivanandaji and said: "I believe you are in search of a plot of ground. I am ready to sell this garden together with the house for 6000 rupees. I won't sell it to anybody else if you are willing to buy it."

That very moment Swamiji called Charuchandra and said: "Buy this garden for the Sevashram. Let this portion, on which stands this house, be purchased for the Advaita Ashram and the rest of the garden for the Sevashram by the Mission. Arrange for the purchase through a lawyer after duly examining the tittle of the vendor."

This golden opportunity was specially welcome to Charuchandra who remembered the wish of Swami Vivekananda, who often said that he would like to see the monks offer prayer, perform religious rites and worship God at the Advaita Ashram and serve Him at an adjoining Sevashram through service to the poor, diseased and destitute. Charuchandra perhaps exclaimed to himself: "Oh my Lord, let thy will be done!"

Charuchandra set about making arrangements for the purchase of the land. Kedarnath (Swami Achalananda) took a leading part. They were fortunate enough to have the benefit of advice from Swami Saradananda, the Secretary of the Ramkrishna Mission, who broke journey at Benares on his way to Advaita Ashram, Mayavati. The main difficulty was about the title of the property. Some lawyers

were of opinion that the purchase of the land might involve the Sevashram in litigation. The owner who had been offered twice the value by another customer allowed a fixed period of time to the Sevakas to decide the matter. Only one day was left, when both Saradanandaji and Shivanandaji felt the necessity of coming to a conclusion at once. They, accompanied by Kedarnath, went to Srijut Nibaran Chandra Gupta, an eminent lawyer and Secretary to the Managing Committee of the Sevashram. After examining the documents carefully the gentleman gave a written advice in favour of the purchase. Lest there might be some flaw which might have escaped his search, they approached Munshi Madholal, the jewel of the Benares bar, who was afterwards awarded the title of Raja by the Government. He fully endorsed the opinion of Srijut Nibaran Chandra Gupta. They then consulted a few members of the Managing Committee and decided to purchase the property. The consideration money was paid that very day and the sale deed was drawn up and registered in a few days. The purchase was effected in 1906.

The Mission paid 4000/- rupees for the house and adjoining land while the Sevashram paid 2000/- rupees for the garden which measured about five bighas.

The Sevakas had sacrificed every thing and wholeheartedly embraced service to the needy as the highest ideal of life. They depended for their work

on the charity of the public. They supplied body, mind and soul which alone was not sufficient. Material help was necessary. With the purchase of the land there was much greater need of public sympathy and charity, without which the Home of Service could not be built.

This new turn in the life of the Sevashram afforded an opportunity to such charitably disposed persons as are willing to spend money to perpetuate the memory of their near and dear relations, for fulfilling their desire together with ameliorating the lot of the destitute. Monetary contributions, therefore, for building memorial wards came one after another in quick succession.

Charity and service joined hands through the will of Viswanath for building the temple in which Naranarayana (God in Man) was to be worshipped according to the needs of the present age.

On the bright auspicious morning of the sixteenth day of April, 1908, the newly purchased garden presented a unique spectacle. Before an august assemblage of the local gentlemen, monks, Sevakas, and sympathisers, Swami Brahmanandaji, the President of the Ramkrishna Mission, laid the foundation of the Home of Service to the greatest joy of all present on the occasion.

XV

CHARUCHANDRA MANAGES THE SEVASHRAM

Within two years the construction work of the Sevashram was completed under the guidance and supervision of Swami Vijnananandaji and Swami Sachchidanandaji, through the liberality of the donors and the indefatigable labour and care of the Sevakas, specially of Swami Achalananda.

On May 16, 1910, was seen the tall figure of Swami Brahmanandaji at the door of the new building surrounded by monks and Sevakas for the opening ceremony which was solemnly performed.

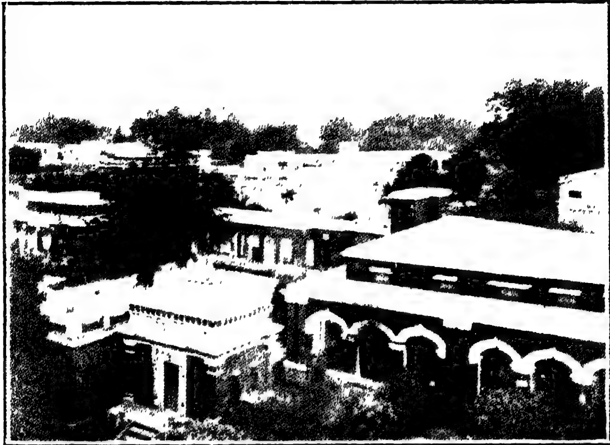
On the spot, which had been an old garden in a miserable condition only two years back, stood the Sevashram with doors open, inviting the homeless, the diseased and the destitute to come to their own home where shelter, service and cordiality awaited them.

Sri Sri Maharajji, Sri Sri Mahapurush Maharajji, Srijut Ramlal Chatterji accompanied by a few Brahmacharis, monks and devotees came from Calcutta to attend the opening ceremony, to the great delight and encouragement of the Sevakas.

Swami Shivanandaji left for Calcutta after the ceremony.

A general meeting was called on the sixth day of July under the presidency of Mr. Gaskell, the

The Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service



Birdseye View



Another View

then Magistrate and Collector of Benares, who was requested to open the main office of the Sevashram after the meeting was over. The gentleman was greatly impressed. He praised the workers unreservedly.

The Hospital Department of the Sevashram consisted of six general wards and three infectious wards with a total capacity of forty-six beds. The outdoor department consisted of an outdoor dispensary, library, stores etc. From that day Mr. Gaskell took an active interest in the Sevashram, for which he secured from the Municipality an annual subscription of Rs. 120/- which was further increased, and the Municipal tax remitted at his instance. For these acts of kindness the Sevashram will remain grateful to this noble-hearted official.

The Sevashram was thus based on a permanent footing but the number of Sevakas was inadequate for the enormous expansion of work. One individual Sevaka had to attend to different kinds of work. Charuchandra took upon himself several duties; yet they could not cope with the work properly. An appeal to Belur Math for some helpers was in vain as that institution was itself short of workers.

Charuchandra, therefore, resolved to train up a band of local workers. Beside the regular monk Sevakas, some youths, mostly students of schools and colleges, rendered part-time service to the institution; but even this could not cope with the work. Charuchandra's personality attracted recruits, mainly from

three classes of people. With the advent of the Swadeshi Movement, a feeling of intense patriotism was awakened in the youths of Bengal some of whom were glad to work in the Sevashram, which was equivalent to service rendered to the Motherland. Another class of people finding this noble path of Action as the true one for reaching God, embraced this sacred duty at the Sevashram. Then again, there were grateful hearts who had felt the balming effects of the service rendered to them in their distress and after recovery gladly enlisted themselves as Sevakas to serve others in distress.

This new material had to be wrought properly to give the maximum result. Charuchandra was the strictest of disciplinarians, kindest of the kind and humblest of the humble. He was a great teacher who did not instruct through precepts but moulded others by his own example. He conquered the hearts of his fellow-workers and did not impose his will arbitrarily. Though responsible for the whole management he behaved as if he was the servant of all within the compound. Not to speak of the Naranarayanas who were his idols, he would look to the convenience, comforts and wants of the Sevakas with a mother's care and love. He was loved by all and followed by all in the discharge of the sacred duty.

Charuchandra was very economical. According to the Guru's orders he regarded a single pie as his life-blood. Under his management there was no

possibility of a single pie being wasted. He received a small remittance from his brothers from the income of his paternal property; with this he maintained himself and often spent a portion of it for the Sevakas without their knowledge. Sometimes depriving himself of bare necessities.

As an instance of his extreme solicitude for the prevention of waste of money and rectitude of conduct may be mentioned the incident of the monk who after his meal asked Charuchandra to give him two cloves in place of one according to rules. Charuchandra replied that as he was only the custodian of the Sevashram and not the owner he had no right to give him two.

He would not allow more than six or seven match-sticks to be used in a day.

He collected envelopes from letters, packing paper from parcels of books, magazines and newspapers etc. into a big heap. A Sevaka asked his permission to throw away that heap of rubbish; he said: "Please excuse me. Do you regard it useless and therefore want to remove it? If so please remember that man has no right to regard anything as mean. There is sufficient room for these pieces of paper in the Sevashram. If you want to remove them for the sake of decency and cleanliness please arrange them properly to look decent and clean. I object to this heap being thrown away because there is nothing in this world which is useless. If a thing is preserved it is sure

to prove useful some time. One day some benefit may be derived by the Sevashram from these bits".

The Sevaka was silent out of respect for Charuchandra but most probably his sight at that moment did not penetrate so far into the future; but the utterance of that pure and noble soul proved true; the heap was sold during the European War for nearly sixty-five rupees, not a mean gain to the Sevashram.

It is impossible to narrate here the all-round activities of this sage whose influence was felt by all. The Sevashram was really the Garden of Bliss, where the sevakas went round serving the patients replacing despair by hope, disease by health and heat of desire by the balm of dispassion. They were like so many angels moving in an atmosphere of noble action, under the guidance of the divine soul, Charuchandra.

Sj. Debendra Nath Majumdar drew a true and beautiful word picture of the then Sevashram in a poem in Bengali whose English paraphrase is given below:

1. "Who are you clad in saffron clothes, that lead a Brahmachari's life in this sacred city, living on alms, yet not disposed to visiting temples, worshipping idols, telling beads? You seem to have renounced the world, what is your mission?

2. "At Benares through devotion to Viswanath salvation comes within the reach of the devotee and all worldly ties are torn. Why do you not worship

Him? Do you not want salvation? It is very strange specially for a monk!

3. Then again who is this gentleman not attired in the monk's robe but surrounded by monks? Such a spectacle is quite novel; please explain the situation and remove my doubt.

4. Oh I see, you are divine beings who have come down with the gospel of service. You don't want salvation, but to serve God by serving the poor and forlorn, whom you embrace with great love.

5. Service is your mission at whose altar you have sacrificed your individuality and identified yourselves with the poor and forlorn. You have realised the truth propounded by the Shastras that God is in all created beings.

6. Without such realisation of God in man who can so carefully pick and devotedly nurse patients suffering from infectious diseases, untouchable to the physician and unapproachable by others, owing to stench and loathsome condition?

7. You search for the needy householder, the poor, the diseased and render various kinds of help by distributing medicines, food, clothing and money according to the nature of the need. Where else is such an example of philanthropy to be found?

8. Some say that nothing can equal maternal love. True it is that the mother loves her child with an intensity unparalleled in the world but it is confined to her own child and is only a natural bond.

9. Real love is a treasure of the free soul, which irrespective of caste, creed or race, indifferent to relationship or otherwise, unmoved by fear of hatred, distributes it to all alike. The selfish man, on the other hand, thinks for himself only.

10. Alas ! it is impossible for this old and diseased body to be consecrated to the service of the man. Unfortunate am I who have not tasted the pleasure of this expansion of the soul. Let destiny have its course. You are fortunate, you are happy, and you are great !

11. I bow my head in reverence to all of you, who are engaged in this noble work, in whatever capacity ; you are divine love incarnate ; your touch sanctifies the earth ; your example removes all morbid desires from the heart, and helps the realisation of the highest aim of life."



SWAMI SHUBHANANDA
(Charu Babu)

XVI

CHARUCHANDRA'S EXCURSIONS AND DISCOURSES

Charuchandra's work was not only to make rules and regulations for the Sevashram and to enforce them. He was everywhere doing everything that required his attention. In spite of all this he had a childlike heart. In the Sevashram he was regarded as the embodiment of knowledge, action and devotion. Outside the Sevashram he was a wonderfully simple and sociable friend, and all used to share the bliss of his soul.

After a day's labour at the Sevashram he would go out for a walk in the evening with some Sevakas, who would like to accompany him to the river side or to some other place near or distant. His companions were always entertained with short pleasant stories full of wit and humour ; sometimes he entertained them with fruits and other edibles at his own cost. Sometimes he would give a nice discourse on the sayings of Swamiji, which he happened to remember at the moment. As all the Sevakas could not go every day on account of duties at the Sevashram he divided them into several groups and relieved them, turn by turn, by means of these evening excursions. This had a very wholesome effect on the minds of the Sevakas, whose

health improved by such evening walks after the day's hard labour.

Besides these excursions, there were certain fixed occasions of religious festivals, like the Mahashtami and the Shiva Chaturdashi, when he would take all the Sevakas to the different temples in the city. On these two fasting days he used to abstain from drinking water even; others who were unable to do so were allowed to take fruits or some milk. On the Basant Panchami day he would go to Vyasa Kashi or Ramnagar, and in the month of Sravan to Saranath with the Sevakas.

On such special occasions when a large number of Sevakas accompanied him he made such arrangements that only a few workers, who remained behind, could manage the whole work without any inconvenience to the patients.

For these pretty long journeys, he took rations consisting of rice, pulse etc., from the Sevashram, while he purchased some fried paddy and sweet with his own money by way of a treat to the Sevakas.

These excursions were not without their educational value. Hardihood, presence of mind, skill and resourcefulness were developed. Starting early in the morning on foot the party would reach the destination at about noon. They made themselves at home under a tree; some fetched water, others fuel, and a few took their bath at the nearest well. Some began to cook the food. Some performed the daily worship and prayer. The sight of the idol in

the nearest temple was availed of by all. The food was cooked, duly dedicated to the Deity and distributed. The party took some rest and spent part of the afternoon in visiting places of interest in the neighbourhood, or in religious talk, recitation, devotional songs and the like. The party returned home at sunset.

Charuchandra had a natural attraction for idols of the different gods and goddesses, whose temples he visited and walked round with joy and delight. He firmly believed that both physical and spiritual power increases by the worship of images, which has been an integral part of the spiritual life of the Indian people from the earliest periods of human history. The bank of the Ganges was another favourite resort of his, where, seated in the midst of the Sevakas, he would relate the mythological and historical accounts of shrines and idols, sacred spots and lives of sages and devotees. He felt a sort of ecstatic joy whenever he spoke of Service in this strain :

"If God ever reveals Himself to any one, it is to him who serves, to his utmost ability, the downtrodden, the sinner, the distressed, the poor, and all creatures, the meanest insect not excepted. That man is really fortunate who can dedicate his life wholly and unreservedly to the service of Nara Narayana (God-in-man) nay, of all creatures in the Universe. He should be prepared to go to hell if that would benefit any creature. The so-

called salvation is a mirage. Real salvation is the expansion by the magical power of Love of the individual soul till it embraces the whole universe. So long as man's thought is centred round himself he is in bondage. Why should he not break this chain and get emancipated ?

"Selfish thoughts beget all sorts of worries, trouble and miseries for man. When it is changed from self to other creatures it verily becomes a prayer to God. Let him but think of others, his heart will begin to beat in sympathy with others' woes, he will feel the responsibility of his duty to others, and a fire of enthusiasm will be kindled in him, which will reduce to ashes all the selfish thoughts that have hitherto been oppressing the heart. Salvation does not lie in this heap of ashes, which should rather be washed away with the Ganges water of sympathy for others, before real salvation can be attained. Even the lowest creature thinks of itself. Where lies the greatness of man if his ideal is not loftier ? He should live not for himself but for others. Since the mental sphere is above the physical one and the psychic above the mental, the realisation of the soul is possible only by the expansion of the egoistic self through others. One should not, therefore, be sorry to merge one's self into those of others. Real bliss and life's worth consists in self-sacrifice. He is really a man who forgets himself and takes delight in serving others. If any body wants to make the

best use of life let him dedicate himself to the service of others. At all times saints and sages have lived for others. If they have any desire it is the desire of helping and serving others. They only, who attained truth, beauty and bliss through self-sacrifice have lived an ideal life in this world."

This was the substance of the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. It was put into practice by his disciple Charuchandra, who in his turn instilled it into those who came in contact with him.

Those young Sevakas who had not the good fortune to see Swami Vivekananda derived the benefit of his teachings from Charuchandra's discourses. He was himself mad after service to others and his associates imbibed this noble madness from him.

XVII

THE FEMALE BRANCH OF THE SEVASHRAM

Thus the Home of Service passing through many difficulties during the long period completed the eleventh year of its existence laying by a rich store of experience, physical, mental and psychic for the workers. Much was yet to be done. ' Like so many bricks, Jamini Ranjan, followed in succession by Charuchandra, Kedarnath, their friends and all other workers, who joined them during this long period, built up the foundation of that temple in which was to be worshipped God in the form of man.

On the eve of the first "Yuga"* the workers perceived a long dark night intervening between that eve and the bright dawn of hope of the future.

They knew quite well that they had not been able to remove an appreciable amount of human misery by their service during this period. They found around them innumerable miserable beings steadily advancing towards the grave day by day. The very atmosphere resounded with the cries of the homeless, the helpless, the hungry, the invalid and the old. Is this mire of misery there in this peaceful lake to aid the growth of the lotus of love

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* **A period of 12 years is called a yuga.**

for all creatures ? God resides in all creatures but specially in the hearts of the poor, whose service and worship brings man nearer to God. He who has realised this truth has reached perfection and consummation of the highest aim of the human life. He would gladly embrace the poor creature in distress, picking him up from the dust and dirt as he would his idol and feel the bliss of salvation and beatitude.

The Sevakas found this pleasure amidst the harrowing cries of woe they came across in their search for the poor Naranarayans. They were few in number, while the idols were many. Unless their example attracted a larger number of people to share with them this pleasure of service, not only at Benares, but all over India, her resurrection was quite distant. The Sevakas, therefore, did not confine their activities to one locality but tried to spread this gospel by starting branches, wherever possible, so that all misery, all poverty and all sorts of helplessness might be wiped out of the land. Let all sons and daughters of India come forward with their good wishes to help the Sevakas in their new attempt. The field is vast, the task is difficult, but let every one do as much as he can.

By Viswanath's grace a generous rich gentleman, who had appreciated this pious desire of the Sevakas, came to them of his own accord and placed one hundred rupees in their hands for opening a branch and promised to subscribe the same amount monthly

which he regularly paid afterwards. With this generous help a house was rented at Jangambari in February 1912 for this purpose. Twenty helpless old widows were admitted and arrangements for their food, clothing and other necessaries were made. All wants were removed through the untiring zeal of the Sevakas and the munificence of the new donors.

The success was greater than the Sevakas had anticipated. Their disinterested work attracted help from all quarters. In a short time after the establishment of this branch an unexpected help of a considerable magnitude came from the famous publisher and merchant Sj. Nibaran Chandra Das of Benares, who towards the end of his life made over nearly all the property to the Sevashrama in 1913. The running concern yielded a decent income in addition to a house near Dasaswamedh, his own residence. His gift was intended as an aid to helpless females. This pious desire had been latent in his heart for a long time and on the eve of translating that desire into action he heard about the Sevashram and made a gift of his whole life's savings for this purpose. Great was Nibaran Chandra, who consecrated his all to the service of the poor. The female branch of the Sevashram at Dasaswamedh, where it was permanently removed from Jangambari is a fitting memorial to the great soul which now rests in peace in Heaven.

This branch has permanent accomodation for

eighteen invalid widows, though a large number of helpless females get temporary shelter and relief here. The arrangement for the management of this branch was to the entire satisfaction of the Sevakas and those who received shelter there. The main object was to give relief to the poor, old and infirm ladies. It was arranged that no male should be allowed to live there. The internal management, consisting of the control of the stores, looking after female cooks (who must be Brahmin by caste) and menials etc was entrusted to one or two among the resident ladies, who were willing and suitable enough to take up this work. The Sevakas would perform all the outdoor work at the instance of these ladies. Food was cooked for the noon meal and the widows were supplied with light refreshment at night. If any one fell ill, arrangements were made to take her temporarily to the main Sevashram for treatment. Thus the old helpless widows spent the remaining days of their lives in this asylum, brought into existence by the spirit of service of the Sevakas and maintained by the charity of the generous public.

XVIII

A USEFUL PIECE OF ADVICE

With the expansion of the field of activity the work increased considerably. Some wards had already been built with the money received before the year 1910 closed. Some of the promised money was received a little later and could not be utilized for building purposes. On the other hand, there was no space left for constructing other wards, though there was a great need for some wards for infectious diseases, like cholera, small pox, dysentery, plague, phthisis etc.

There were some plots of land adjoining the Sevashram which, if purchased, could remove this difficulty. The Sevakas tried to get them but the owners did not want to part with them. The Sevakas waited in the hope that the owners would ultimately take pity on the poor sufferers and part with the lands to aid this philanthropic work. Relying on the mercy of God they made the best of the accommodation they had to lodge patients of infectious diseases. Their anxiety was great, but the opportunity still seemed to be quite remote.

One fine morning, when the melodious songs of birds mingled with the music at the temples at the hour of morning worship, a European was

The Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service



Outdoor Dispensary



A side view

at the gate of the Sevashram. On nearer approach, the gentleman was recognised to be Mr. Streatfield, the Collector of Benares. He was duly welcomed and taken round. While visiting the different wards, his attention was drawn to the helplessness of the Sevakas in the matter of the wards assigned to infectious diseases, owing to want of space for constructing new wards for the purpose. They told him that there were some plots adjacent to the Sevashram, for which they had appealed to the owners several times in vain. He was shown those plots from the terrace of the office. The Collector said : "You are working for the good of all. In reality it is the work of the public. You can get these lands under the Land Acquisition Act. You had better apply and I shall give you every help in my power. Why should you acquire only five or six bighas of land ? Apply for the whole of this big piece. As Chairman of the Municipality, I wanted to purchase a plot for constructing a public latrine, but the Zemindar did not agree. If you get the land, you will have to sell a part of it on the southern side to the Municipality. He then praised the work the Sevakas had undertaken and said "I heard about the noble work you have been doing here. I am highly pleased with your selflessness and magnanimity. It is very laudable for you to devote yourself whole-heartedly to this philanthropic work. Your general fund received an annual grant from the Municipality, and your association is a

duly registered body, established for the benefit of the public. Hence you have the right to acquire at a reasonable cost all the lands round you under the Land Acquisition Act."

Charuchandra and others expressed their gratitude to the Collector, for the interest he took in the work and the advice and promise of help in the matter of acquiring the lands. They agreed further to follow his sound and wholesome advice.

Srimat Swami Brahmanandaji, President, the Ramkrishna Mission, was present at Benares at that time. Charuchandra earnestly took up this work. They decided to acquire the lands for which an application was duly made towards the end of 1912, when the Sevashram first came in touch with the Govt. through their sympathetic representative Mr. Streatfield.

The year was a memorable one for the Sevakas, for in October, 1912, the Holy Mother (Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva's wife) came to Benares. In that connection Swami Brahmanandaji, Swami Turiyanandaji and Swami Shivanandaji were present at Benares.

She put up at Lakshminibas, a house near the Advaita Ashram belonging to Srijut Haripada Datta. Under her auspices many religious ceremonies and festivals like Kalipuja, Jagaddhatripuja, Rasyatra, were celebrated at the Advaita Ashram, which infused into her sons a spirit of devotion. She held before them the ideal of Service also and impressed her sons deeply.

Dr. Nripendra Nath Mukerji was the principal worker in connection with her visit and stay at Benaras.

The Sevakas are grateful to Sri M., the writer of the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita, for putting in black and white in the visitor's book what the Mother had said on that occasion about the Sevashram.

It is reproduced below :—

"The visit of the Holy Mother.

The Holy Mother paid a visit to the Sevashram today. After obtaining the sight of Thakur at the Ashram, she came to the Sevashram at 7 in the morning. Many devotees, both male and female, including Srijut Rakhal Maharaj, President, the Ramkrishna Mission, Hari Maharaj, Charu Babu, Dr. Kanjilal and others, were present. Srijut Kedar Babaji walked by the side of her palanquin and showed her the different wards, like Hari Ballav Memorial Ward, the wards in memory of Atal Babu's mother, in memory of Krishna Babu's son etc.

She then passed through the hall and visited the Allopathic and Homœopathic Dispensaries, Surgical Room and other places.

Seated with devotees round her, she expressed her delight at the buildings, gardens, and good management of the Sevashram. She said : "Thakur himself lives here, and Lakshmi (The goddess of fortune) has chosen this place as her abode. Well,

how did it start ?" Kedar Babaji told her all about Charu Babu and others. He said that during construction Dinanath Babaji supervised the work. Srijut Rakhal Maharaj informed her of the great care and labour of Kedar Baba. The Mother was very glad and said: "This place is so charming that I am almost inclined to live here permanently."

She returned home. A few minutes later a devotee came to the President and handed over to him ten rupees being her gift to the Sevashram.

Advaita Ashram, Benares
November 8, 1912 Shri M.................

The currency note sent by the Holy Mother was carefully deposited in the Sevashram as a heavenly blessing from the Goddess of Fortune, and is still preserved as a sacred treasure.

One day the Mother visited the female branch of the Sevashram at Jangambari where she sympathised with the sufferers and blessed them. Her loving and sympathetic words acted as a soothing balm on the inmates.

The visit of the Holy Mother, her interest in the Sevashram, and the performance of religious ceremonies at the Advaita Ashram had a very salutary influence on the spiritual life of the Sevakas to whom the Sevashram owes so much for the improvements made.



OPERATION THEATRE
B. K. Paul Memorial

XIX

EXTENSION OF THE SEVASHRAM

In September 1913, Swami Brahmanandaji, President, the Ramkrishna Mission, was staying at the Sevashram, Benares, to the great delight of the Sevakas. The Durgapuja festival was celebrated under his guidance, at the Advaita Ashram, with great pomp to the great joy of all the inmates, monks, Brahmacharis, and devotees.

In the beginning of 1914, when winter was becoming more and more severe, one night a patient, who had gone out to answer nature's call, fell into a big reservoir of water, while washing his hands and feet. Just at that moment Swamiji, who had also gone out, hearing the cries of the patient, called Vishwaranjan Maharaj with whose help he rescued the man and carried him safely to his bed. Swamiji did not mention anything about the incident to either the Sevakas on duty or to any body else. We heard it from Vishwaranjan Maharaj. The Sevakas who had been on duty were very sorry, and every one was impressed with this ideal of silent work.

In April 1914, about 25 bighas of land adjoining the Sevashram was purchased at a cost of Rs. 15,000.

Within a week of the possession of the land, before any plan had been prepared, Mr. Streatfield

laid the foundation of the new building, before a large gathering of respectable persons, amidst shouts of joy and cheer.

This hurry was necessitated by the fact that Mr. Streatfield, who had been so good and kind to the Sevashram, was going to retire and leave for England in May ; the authorities of the Sevashram expressed their deep sense of gratitude by inviting him to lay the foundation of the new building before his departure. This newly acquired big piece of land was assigned to the several buildings of the Segregation Department and residences for honorary doctors and Sevakas.

Swami Vijnananandaji worked out the details of the plans, site plans and estimates.

Charuchandra undertook to get the work executed as soon as possible. In the beginning of 1915, Swami Shivanandaji and Swami Premanandaji performed the necessary, auspicious ceremonies for starting the construction, which progressed satisfactorily as help, mainly unexpected, began to pour in from different quarters to the surprise of the Sevakas themselves, who attributed this brilliant success to the blessings of Viswanath, in whose Garden of Bliss, this new tree of shelter, sprouting from a small seed grew at a rapid rate to bring under its foliage such a vast field of action.

In the beginning of 1916, the generosity of donors completed five different wards in the Segregation Department, which were duly consecrated on

November 7, 1916, by Swami Shivanandaji and Swami Premanandaji.

The longfelt want was thus removed. The Sevakas saw the divine hand in the accomplishment of this difficult work as if by magic. Everything necessary was supplied by Him for whose worship the Sevaks wanted to build this temple. Charuchandra's heart leaped with joy at the thought that a four-anna bit, put on Jaminiranjan's palm by an unknown genlteman, had the enormous potentiality for good, which, by the grace of Viswanath, manifested itself as the Sevashram with its recently added Segregation Department. The tears of sufferers certainly had moved the heart of Viswanath and His blessings brought into existence the Sevashram and effected its miraculous expansion.

The heavenly inspiration which sustained the Sevakas in their noble but arduous work of service to the poor, the forlorn and the diseased, first came from Swami Vivekananda and was then followed by the blessings and good wishes of the Holy Mother and Sri Maharaj. An unbroken stream of good wishes, blessings, encouragement and care flowed from such Mahatmas as Swami Shivanandaji, Saradanandaji, Niranjananandaji, Turiyanandaji Premanandaji, Akhandanandaji and others. These saints have been the guides of the small band of youths whom they led to such signal success. The Sevakas looked up to them for guidance in matters

both spiritual and temporal. Their teachings, their example and their guidance led the Sevakas steadily and systematically to the goal. The nobleness, purity and regularity of work attracted the attention and sympathy of the public.

It was certainly God's will that a handful of helpless youths, led by these sages, should initiate and accomplish a piece of philanthropic work of such great magnitude with greater future possibilities. Could Arjuna defeat such great generals as Bhisma, Drona, Kripa, and Karna without Bhagavan Sri Krishna's help ?

Let us then exclaim again ; "Oh Lord ! Thou art the Player ; we the Sevakas are mere instruments in Thy hand ; let the music be produced according to Thy will !"

XX

AN UNEXPECTED CLOUD OF GLOOM

The work in the Sevashram is going smoothly. One after another new workers are enlisting themselves as Sevakas. The example set by one induces another to take up this noble work. Charuchandra, after so many years' constant struggle, feels safe and secure. He is delighted no doubt, but not fully. He was feeling another want. This feeling oppressed his heart.

There was a Female Department of the Sevashram not very far off, but Charuchandra saw the necessity of bringing it to its own home. Unless this could be done Charuchandra would not admit the prefection of the Sevashram.

At the Sevashram males and only old females could be admitted and served ; because there was a great want of Sevikas or female workers. A few middle-aged ladies offered their services and some actually worked from time to time, but it was not possible to admit a large number of female patients in the face of this drawback. To bring some workers from the branch Ashram was out of the question owing to the poor quality of work they showed there.

Besides this, it was impossible to admit a young female patient or a Sevika. In exceptional, emergent cases, when one or two were admitted, they

could not be nursed or served properly for want of female workers.

Owing to all these causes, the activities of this Department had practically come to a standstill. There was the intention, but not the opportunity to revive it.

Therefore up to 1917, except old female patients, no service worth mention could be rendered at the Sevashram to women in general.

With the completion of the work of the male wards at the Sevashram, Charuchandra felt very sorry for this want. He resolved to remove it. The Sevakas were ready to help him but he did not know how to proceed.

Charuchandra thought that Shiva and Parvati are inseparable like the word and its meaning (Vagarthavivasampriktau). For the full realisation of the conception of Service, the Father and Mother of the Universe would surely bless the idea of opening a Female Department at the Sevashram. This optimism filled his heart with hope and joy.

When these thoughts were occupying Charuchandra's mind at Benares, similar ones arose in another mind at Calcutta.

The Ramkrishna Mission was managing the Girls' School established by Sister Nivedita.

In 1917, Brahmacharini Shrimati Sudhira Devi, the then Headmistress of that School, wrote to Charuchandra saying that, on the opening of a new section at the Sevashram for young ladies

and girls, she would gladly take up the management, if permitted to do so, and would bring some suitable lady workers also from the Girls' School.

When Sudhira Devi had once come to Benares and visited the Sevashram, she had talked on the subject to Charuchandra, but there had been no such offer of services. After returning to Calcutta this thought sometimes came to her mind, but she had no opportunity to give expression to her desire to serve. She talked about it to two ladies who encouraged her. She then resolved to place her services at the disposal of the Sevashram in the cause of those ladies and girl sufferers, who could not be admitted owing to their young age. She induced the two ladies also to join her in this work and acquainted Charuchandra with her desire.

This delighted Charuchandra extremely. He had already been encouraged by Srijut Hari Charan Banerji, a member of the Managing Committee, and had purchased a small house near the Sevashram, at a cost of three thousand rupees, for sheltering young females in distress, but could not start the work for want of suitable female workers. Srimati Sudhira Devi's proposal was gladly accepted and he resolved to open a branch for the relief of young widows, girls, and other young females in distress.

Though this humble beginning was far too short of what Charuchandra desired, yet he realised the necessity of providing some sort of shelter, for

at least a moderate number of young females, like the one at Dasaswamedh for old ones. Something is better than nothing. With these considerations he opened a separate department of the Sevashram under the management of Srimati Sudhira Devi and her colleagues in 1918, at that house with 18 helpless young females.

The aim of this new Department was not to give food and shelter to helpless but young women. Arrangements were made for teaching them such arts and industries as might earn for them an honest and honourable living. Provisions were also made for moral and religious instruction.

The work of this Department was promising. Those who received shelter found themselves rescued from the sea of despair to the haven of hope and peace, where a new life awaited them. Those who were ready to embrace death at every moment would fain live if only to taste the new life they had never dreamt of.

This new plant of hope was growing beautifully with leaves and flowers ; but who knows with what divine intention it was maimed and dwarfed by the following cold blast of sorrow ?

Srimati Sudhira Devi was returning from a pilgrimage to Allahabad by the B.N.W. Ry. Near a station, not far from Benares, the door of the compartment opened by accident, and she tumbled down. Her companions pulled the chain, but it took some time to stop the train, which ran a

considerable distance from the spot. It was however with difficulty moved back. She was picked up in a senseless condition and brought to Benares Cantt. Station. Sir Raja Moti Chand was also coming by that train. He got down at Manduadih Station near his palace and sent a messenger by motor car to the Sevashram at about midnight. Some Sevakas started at once with a stretcher to the station and brought her to the Sevashram.

The experienced doctors of the Sevashram tried their best. Mr. Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya, the famous doctor of Calcutta, and Srijut Kali Prasanna Lahiri, retired Civil Surgeon, were fortunately in Benares at that time. Their expert services were availed of, but to no purpose. No one could bring her to her senses.

She remained senseless for about 22 hours.

The following evening, when the last rays of the sun were bidding good night to the ripples on the sacred stream, when the first ringing of the bell at the temple of Viswanath gave a signal to all the temples in the sacred city for vespers, Sudhira's soul was carried to Heaven.

The Sevakas received a heavy shock at this unexpected tragedy. Their hope to see the newly started Department flourish under her able management vanished. Her departure, amidst the music in the temple and lights in the city, left a deep sigh and a mantle of darkness for the temple, which she had come to serve.

XXI

ABOLITION OF THE FEMALE DEPARTMENT

Sudhira had gone after finishing her work, but the gap thus created could not be filled. There was none in the Ashram, and no one could be found outside, who could be expected to take up the work and perform it even less ably. The responsibility in connection with this new Department was very great ; because those, who had got shelter here, were all young. Without proper arrangement of staff the authorities were not disposed to work this Department at all. They tried to get some suitable hands and waited for two or three months. At last they were compelled to close it. Some of the inmates were given reasonable monetary help, and arrangements were made for them elsewhere. Some widows advanced in age and a few girls were temporarily removed to the Dasaswamedh Branch. Some girls, who had made some progress in learning, were sent to the Nivedita School at Calcutta. Three of the elderly inmates volunteered their services as Sevikas.

This left some more space for old female patients in the common wards of the Sevashram, but the difficulty of admitting young female patients remained unsolved. The management was even alive to this need. To make the best use of whatever

materials and opportunities they had, the management resolved to reorganize the Female Department. Swami Saradanandaji, Secretary, the Ramkrishna Mission, was invited for consultation and guidance in the matter.

It was decided to separate the Female Department completely from the Male Department. Some new rules and regulations were framed for the management of the Female Department.

About this time an elderly lady offered her services, which solved the difficulty partly. It was hoped that the earnestness of the lady would surely make up for her inexperience. The new department was put under her charge. The work was taken up in right earnest.

After the new arrangement came in force the girls, who had been temporarily removed to the Dasaswamedh Branch, were recalled and arrangements were made for their education. As proper arrangements could not be made at the Ashram, as was done under Sudhira Devi, the girls were admitted to the nearest girls' school; but every care was taken of them at the Ashram.

Besides this, they received lessons in nursing; they practised simple and easy experiments in nursing at leisure. Their moral, spiritual and physical welfare was not neglected. The Ashram took special care to instil into the hearts of these young maidens the special virtues, which distinguish the Indian womanhood.

Gradually the Female Department progressed towards the fulfilment of the main aim of the Sevashram, which was to awaken in the minds of those, who received service in distress, a sense of duty and motherlike sympathy for others, who might come after them and thus realise their identity of nature with Viswamata, the Mother of the Universe.

Spontaneously did the inmates take up the work of service. Naturally and willingly they took interest and delight in learning how to prepare and compound medicines, apply bandages, and perform other duties. They have picked up the work so ably and nicely that they perform all such duties now in their Department without any help from the male workers. The doctors simply see the patients daily and prescribe medicines for them. The Sevikas manage everything else with the advice of the manager.

The Female Department has made progress in another direction. Some of the helpless but intelligent girls, who had no hopes in life, are now receiving higher education in colleges. The possibility of such success could not be imagined after Sudhira Devi's demise.

The main object of this Department is to relieve the distress of old, poor, infirm and diseased women. This field of work is by itself sufficiently vast; hence in future it may not be possible for this Ashram to arrange for the education of young girls.

But so long as opportunities will be available for rendering this kind of service, the Sevashram will be ready to shoulder this responsibility also.

The efforts of the Sevashram will be crowned with success, when this Female Department will hold before the world the bright ideal, even in miniature, of a hopeless life rescued and changed into one elevated to the highest pinnacle of perfect womanhood, by consecrating that life to the service of humanity.

We do not know whether the Female Department has yet been able, after passing through so many vicissitudes of fortune, to approach Charuchandra's ideal. But it is not an exaggeration to say that like the Ganges rolling on to the sea the Department is progressing towards that ideal. The Sevakas still entertain the hope that a great soul like Sudhira Devi may one day be found at the helm to accelerate the speed.

XXII

THE ORPHAN BOYS

One day in 1920, a number of orphan and helpless boys came to the Sevashram for shelter. Their number increased steadily. Nobody knew before that it was Viswanath's pleasure to assign to the Sevashram the duty of saving such loving young boys from utter ruin. Swami Kalikanandaji, assistant to Charuchandra, undertook the organization of this new department. It was decided to educate and train the boys on the lines of selfhelp and attainment of ideal manhood, as was done with the old ladies and girls at the Female Department.

Regular arrangements were made for their secular education together with spinning, weaving, and other industrial pursuits.

The result was satisfactory. In five years two boys passed the Matriculation Examination. Some were studying in different classes in high schools, and some learnt spinning and weaving quite well. Most of them were fit to earn a living and asked the permission of the Sevashram to go out into the world and stand on their own legs. They were allowed to do so. A few of the younger ones who remained were sent to the Ramkrishna Mission Vidyapith at Deoghar in 1925 for their education.

All the boys having been thus provided for,

there was no necessity of this department in the beginning of 1926, as no new boys were coming for help.

At the departure of boys in search of independent careers, the department of spinning, knitting, and weaving was also closed.

In 1919 Swami Turiyanandaji stayed for some time at the Sevashram during which the Sevakas enjoyed a further strengthening of the spiritual atmosphere. The Swami was interested in the spiritual welfare of each and every individual monk Sevaka. He encouraged them in their work and corrected their errors with mild censure. He used to read and explain to them Bhagavat Gita, Yogavashista, Upanishads and the works of Swami Vivekananda. At that time a few professors of the Central Hindu College regularly came to hear his discourses on the Patanjal Yogasutra. He gave to each aphorism four or five different expositions, through which he established the unity of Cognition, Action and Devotion with such simplicity and lucidity, that the hearers believed the possibility of practising concentration at every stage of life. We never heard such simple, sweet and inspiring interpretations of the sacred texts. His influence for good at the Sevashram cannot be over-estimated. Unfortunalely he was not spared long. He was confined to bed but he continued his discourses to the Sevakas. Only a few days before he breathed his last, he had addressed the monks in a firm and convincing tone :

"Dispel all doubts, devote body, mind and soul wholly to His work ; there is no room for doubt ; go on with your work which will lead you to the goal. Swamiji once told me at Darjeeling 'Brother Hari, this time I have chalked out a new path ; so long people believed that salvation is obtainable only through contemplation, reasoning and telling the beads ; youths of the present age will get salvation in this life by doing His work.' It is his injunction ; banish all doubts."

He used to say also that all sorts of difficulties arise when action is separated from devotion. "I don't like this separation at all. Action in fact is devotion to Him. Asceticism sometimes makes one very selfish. On the other hand in working with others, endurance, contentment, love and other virtues are inculcated easily. Devotion is also action. The result of devotion has to be dedicated to God."

Once there was a great want of workers in the Sevashram. Some one proposed that a paid doctor and a book-keeper might be employed. When it was brought before Swamiji for approval, he said :

"I can never approve the appointment of paid hands due to shortage of Sevakas. It is better to curtail the work or close it altogether. How can action, not prompted by fellow-feeling, love and spirit of service be equivalent to devotion to Him ? He spent about three years and a half at the Sevashram. During this time he held the ideal of Religion as Service before the Sevakas, who at his demise sus-

tained an irreparable loss and the world lost a precious jewel.

To return to the department for helpless boys, it will not be out of place to mention here that it was temporarily opened to meet an emergency.

It was not possible to run a parallel institution for boys along with the fulfilment of the primary aim and object of the Sevashram, which was established to meet the needs of old, infirm and diseased persons.

But the initiation even of a temporary measure like this was a move in the direction of perfection of the Sevashram ; the Sevakas would be glad to repeat it in future if the necessity arose, and do their best in the matter.

That the helpless condition of a number of boys could be improved a little afforded much pleasure to the Sevakas and the donors who helped in the matter.

XXIII

CHARUCHANDRA RETIRES FROM ACTIVE LIFE

Having passed through infancy and childhood, the Sevashram is now in its youth. Twenty years have gone by since the seed of this tree of shelter was sown with a four anna piece, which carried the blessings of Viswanath. It has gradually grown into a gigantic tree, in spite of many storms and hurricanes. Twenty years' unceasing toil, twenty years' perseverance, twenty years' diurnal watering by Charuchandra's unique self-sacrifice, twenty years of ungrudging service by the Sevakas and the well-wishers lay at the root of this tree.

Charuchandra like a skilful pilot steered this institution in its course. No storm, no mist, no cloud could obstruct his vision or make him deviate from the proper route. Everything in connection with the Sevashram bears testimony to Charuchandra's greatness of soul, his untiring perseverance, his indefatigable labour, his skill and his unique devotion and love. That wild, uncared for, practically unutilized piece of land in the heart of the sacred Kashi is now, mainly through Charuchandra, changed into an asylum for the poor, decrepit, old, forlorn, helpless, miserable beings, who hitherto lay in the streets

and lanes, presenting a sorrowful spectacle to the passers-by.

This institution has directly or indirectly exercised a healthy influence on different sections of society for this long period. The householder, who saw the ideal here, carried some impression home, where it found expression in action. The rich visitor perhaps began to think of his duty to the poor, after a visit to this institution, and extended his liberality to the poor.

The poor, who have no place to call their own in this world, came to know that in days of utter distress they would find shelter here. Thus this institution has been serving as a means of bringing together the great and the small, the rich and the poor, and tie all in the common bond of humanity.

Is there any one whose consciousness is not awakened, whose heart does not leap, whose eye is not moistened at the sight of this institution ?

All this is the creation of that dispassionate soul of Charuchandra, who had cast all worldly pleasures and desires into the sacred waters of the Ganges, and plunged himself in the celestial stream of dispassion. This great Yajna (sacrificial ceremony) was performed with the fire of his soul and the blood of his life as the offering. It was Charuchandra who had brought into Benares the New Awakening of Sri Sri Ramkrishna-Vivekananda.

Charuchandra worked patiently hour after hour, day after day and year after year to build this great

centre for his countrymen where one could attain full manhood. There are no such artificial distinctions here which separate man from man; there is no room for despair here: here after many a millennium is visible that ancient light which has so long been shrouded in the mist of misconception.

The external decorations of man like honour, name and fame, possessions like wealth, learning and land, are all ephemeral.

The real greatness of man lies in his psychic possibilities in self-knowledge and self-realisation for which the only path is that of service. Charuchandra in his life has successfully and clearly demonstrated this.

Having realised the inner meaning, as explained to him by his teacher Swami Vivekananda, of Karma, and having practically in his life pursued that Karma (action), through which is attainable that immortality and eternal peace, which India has been proclaiming before the world from time immemorial, Charuchandra has shown to others the only path to salvation.

The flower fades away when its function is over. The attainment of majority by the Sevashram was the signal for Charuchandra to lead his action to the path of perfect dispassion as a preparation for renunciation of all action. No one knew this. Like the rays of the setting sun, which merge into the red clouds, his action began to be shorn of all attachments whatsoever. Having made over the charge to

his fellow workers, he fixed his last abode in seclusion, after incessant work for twenty long years. Who knows what inner prompting changed the course of his life for what useful and beneficial purpose ?

On the night of January 29, the eve of the birthday festival of Swami Vivekananda, he called a Sevaka and said "Kali Babu (Kalikananda) will henceforth manage the Sevashram ; I am taking leave and this is my leave for good !" He went to bed after this. Next morning no body saw him in the Sevashram ! Thus Charuchandra silently left the Sevashram and went to the sacred confluence at Allahabad.

XXIV

CHARUCHANDRA GETS INITIATION AS A MONK

Charuchandra has fixed his abode in a small hut at Jhunsi, a place of resort of Sadhus, monks and sages, not far from the Tribenisangam, the confluence where the crystal water of the Ganges mixes with the bright, bluish stream of the Jumna. The undaunted Charuchandra, who had heroically faced so many difficulties and dangers during the long period of action, has heroically renounced the last vestige of attachment to action itself, and completely surrendered himself to Him. He was surrounded by a few monks who had gone from the Sevashram to see him. He took them for ablution to the confluence, after which they went to receive alms. They returned to the hut where they had a long conversation during which the sun had set and the night had advanced without their knowledge.

One of the Sevakas took leave of him to start for Benares by the midnight train. Charuchandra went to bed and after a wink of rest got up before sunrise and started for the confluence which was still covered with mist.

The bank was dimly visible at some distance on one side ; the fort of Jhunsi stood like a ghostly castle in the mantle of mist. Charuchandra plung-

ed into the holy waters just when the golden rays of the sun threaded the ripples to offer a garland to Mother Ganges.

Charuchandra stood on the bank like one perfectly purified in body and soul. The wakefulness of the night had not the least impression on his calm and peaceful features. He seemed to have transcended all differences between day and night in the delight of emancipation, in the indescribable pleasure of the expansion of the individual soul to seek its identity with eternity in time and limitlessness in space. The holy city of Prayag (Allahabad) seemed to be experiencing heavenly joy at having this saint on its soil.

Charuchandra returned to Benares. In 1921 Charuchandra received initiation as a monk from Swami Brahmanandaji, the beloved disciple of Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhamsa Deva, on his birth day anniversary. With the new spiritual light, he was named 'Swami Shubhananda'. He cut off all connections with this ephemeral world, and with a heart full of joy began a newer phase of life beyond action.

To day the universe is full of blessings to him. He finds benediction all around him. Mists of apprehension of evil have been dispelled by the blissful light of service, which is now full of benison. There is no darkness lurking anywhere, all is full of a great flood of light illuminating the whole world. He feels the fulness of life in his seclusion, a life that pervades the universe.

He travelled alone from one place of pilgrimage to another and spent most of his time in penance and contemplation, thus visiting nearly all the sacred places in India. He lived on charity just to keep body and sóul together, both of which he consigned to austere penance. Pilgrimage delighted him ; the devout residents of a sacred place gave his heart joy. Even the dust of a holy place had a charm for him.

XXV

SWAMI SUBHANANDA STARTS FOR KANKHAL

Swami Kalikananda was managing the Sevashram from 1921. Towards the end of 1924 Swami Shubhananda (Charuchandra) was residing at Benares at the temple of Sri Girishwar. Swami Kalikananda went to him and said with a sorrowful heart. "It is no longer possible for me to manage the Sevashram, as I notice that the Sevakas are fast losing sight of the ideal of the Sevashram and becoming more and more wilful. If you do not return to the Sevashram now, the spirit of service is sure to degenerate very soon. At this crisis there is no one except you, who can teach the Sevakas a lesson. I therefore earnestly pray that you will be pleased to come to the Sevashram to-day."

Shubhanandaji smiled and said : "If it be Sire's will to get any further service from me, I shall gladly do it. You may go, I shall follow you soon."

From 1918 Charuchandra had anticipated another difficulty in which the Sevashram would possibly be involved, and had already discussed it with the Sevakas. Swami Kalikananda's visit to him convinced him that the difficulty had made its appearance.

Swami Shubhananda spoke to the Manager thus : "From the rapid rate of growth both in space and activity it is difficult to estimate the future enormous size of the Sevashram. Side by side with this expansion, I notice and feel the comparatively slow increase in the number of Sevakas of the right sort. This inadequate supply cannot keep pace with the growing needs. Moreover those, who have been nursing the sick day and night with a religious zeal, are every moment doing so at the cost of their health, which requires recoupment. Again, it is a matter of regret that some of the Sevakas sometimes express displeasure towards duty, which carries them away from the main spirit and ideal of the Sevashram. Some on the other hand are doing hard work, but in too mechanical a way to catch the spirit and ideal of the institution. Their body and mind are so much entangled in the whirlpool of work, that they are fast losing hold of the principles on which the work is based. The result of all this is the gradual assertion of the lower propensities of man, like vanity, pride, love of power, arrogance and self-praise, in the speech and action of some of these Sevakas. If this contagion spreads among the majority of the Sevakas, the future of the Sevashram is surely dark. There is sufficient room for anxiety in this direction : after much thought I have come to the conclusion that this state of affairs is the result of a want of daily regular devotion of some time to prayer,

contemplation and review of the ideal. Egoism in a Sevaka goeth before a fall. If a man tumbles down while doing a piece of good work, there is no reason why he should not get up and resume it. The ideal is shattered to pieces when the Sevaka begins to entertain a hope that the patients should remain obliged to him because of his service to them. The relation here is that of master and servant. The patient is the master, the idol, the Nara-Narayana while the Sevaka is only the servant. Can the servant claim any obligation on the part of the master ?

"I have thought out a plan for averting this calamity. Sevakas require some rest and change from their onerous duties. For this purpose, if an Ashram be opened in a holy and healthy place somewhere in the Himalayas on the bank of the Ganges, batches of Sevakas may be sent there by rotation for recoupment of health and spiritual power through meditation and prayer".

Charuchandra's advice was sound. One of the Sevakas evinced great interest in the matter and went out searching for a suitable spot in Vindhyachal, Chunar, Jhunsi, Kankhal, Almora and other places but could not find any. He started a fund for this purpose.

Swami Turiyanandaji endorsed this proposal and said that a similar Ashram had been opened at Kankhal, at his instance, by Master Mahashaya (the author of the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita) at a

house the rent of which was paid by him. It was called "Sadhan Kutir". There were four or five monks there ; but when Swamiji went to Almora, they also left the place and the Ashram automatically closed. He was glad that Charu Babu was going to establish a similar Ashram for which he suggested the old name 'Sadhan Kutir' and heartily blessed the movement.

Along with the search for a suitable spot some money was also collected for the fund.

In the beginning of 1925 Swami Saradanandaji was at Benares and Swami Shubhananda also was putting up at the Sevashram. Hearing that about four bighas of land with two habitable houses was for sale for Rs. 4,500/- at Kishenpur near Dehra Dun, Subhanandaji advised Kalikanandaji, Achalanandaji and other Sevakas, to purchase it at once. There was no money. They went to Swami Saradanandaji for advice.

It was decided to purchase the property by raising a loan which was done in a few days. Subhanandaji went to Kishenpur with the money and purchased the property in the names of Swami Shivanandaji and Swami Saradanandaji, President and Secretary, respectively, of the Ramkrishna Mission. After some time Shubhanandaji went there with three or four Sevakas.

In this way the great man of action entered into the next phase of his noble life which was one of introspection.

What with the austerity of penance, what with the neglect of the body his health was greatly impaired. The bird was beating against the cage for emancipation. He gradually became oblivious of everything mundane, everything material. He was careless of his body. The Sevakas could not control him. The spiritual force of his inner life overcame all physical difficulties and disabilities of his weak and emaciated body. The Sevakas followed him and were ready to help him ; but the Sannyasin was one who would not give any one an opportunity to serve him. He had come to serve others, not to be served by others ; he was fit, there was no necessity for help. Whether he willed it or not he at last found that the machine was not working. The Sevaka monks attended on him, nursed him with great care, love and devotion, but there was no improvement. He was brought to Benares from Kishenpur.

In a feeble voice Shubhanandaji said "Alas ! I am a Sevaka myself, why is it so ordained that others will serve me ?" He was very sorry to find that his body required service. He often said. "Has this useless body still to be borne with the help of others ? It is unbearable !" He forbade the Sevakas to do anything for him and practically became more strict on this point.

The Sevakas however disobeyed him. How could they, who were at the service of the poor, the needy and the diseased, desist from serving him, at the

hour of need, who had initiated them in this act? On the other hand Swami Shubhananda, who had devoted his whole life to the worship of others, had no room left in his heart to accept worship from others. In that pure heart there was not the least trace of any selfish propensity.

In the crystal waters of that mental lake blossomed only lotuses for the worship of Nara-Narayana. By way of compromise he accepted, out of respect for their importunity, the little service which he absolutely required, not an iota more.

About this time, in April 1926, Swami Saradanandaji invited him to the Convocation of the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Misson at Belur, and proposed also that he should, after attending the Convocation, go to Puri for a change. He placed the letter on his head for some time, expressed his inability to accede to the request and kept quiet. He was quite unwilling to leave Benares.

In the meantime Swami Kalikanandaji and others pressed him earnestly and said that they would not go to Belur without him. He had to yield to this pressure of love and said: "If you are so earnest about it, I have no alternative but to accompany you. Swami Kalikanandaji started for Belur before the appointed day for departure to attend to some business. Another monk Sevaka was in charge of Swami Shubhananda's journey.

On the appointed day the carriage was waiting at the gate, the luggage was placed in it, but his

heart was unwilling to leave Benares. He again expressed his unwillingness to go, and while walking up and down the room, was heard to mutter : "No, I won't go. Don't take me, I am unfit for travel, I am unwilling too ; I won't go." Like a small child which makes many excuses when asked to leave its mother's lap, and cries aloud when taken away by force, this middle-aged monk, with childlike simplicity said : "This body of mine won't last long, let it remain here for the remaining few days, don't wrest it from the mother's bosom." He was greatly agitated and his voice was choked. The Sevakas were greatly moved ; they silently carried back the luggage from the carriage to his room.

The monk who had to accompany him left Benares and informed Swami Saradanandaji all about Swami Shubhananda. The Swami thoughtfully remarked : "I understand that excessive hardship has ruined Shubhananda's health. He requires a change. To save his life he should be sent to some healthier place than Benares, where it must already be sufficiently hot, and the heat will increase every day. I am writing to him". The following day he wrote to Shubhanandaji asking him to start for the Sevashram at Kankhal with a monk. He wrote another letter to Kalyanandaji, the Manager, Kankhal Sevashram, to arrange for Swami Shubhananda's reception.

Swami Shubhananda received the letter. He read it, remained silent for some time, placed it

on his head and fixing his eyes on the bright natural scenery before him remarked to a monk Sevaka who was by him. "I thought that this mortal frame of mine would be consigned to the Ganges ; but Viswanath has willed it otherwise ; very well, let it go to Kankhal".

That very Swami Shubhananda, who could not be persuaded to leave Benares for Belur a few days ago, was ready to start for Kankhal, in obedience to the orders of the venerable Swami Saradananda. He ordered for immediate arrangement for his departure.

Within two days the carriage again stood before the gate of the Sevashram. Shubhanandaji took leave. He was accompanied by Swami Chaitanyananda. All the Sevakas, Brahmacharis and monks surrounded him. He embraced and took leave of every individual, nay, of every plant and tree, every brick and stone, every particle of dust of the Sevashram. He got into the carriage, called Swami Amarananda to him and said : "I am going, perhaps not to return. Please take charge of the little money I have in the Post Office Savings Bank. When you hear that this mortal body is no more, please spend part of it in the worship of Sri Sri Thakur and a feast to the monks ; the whole of the remainder should be spent for the poor Narayanas." Like a pilgrim bound for the unknown land he took his last leave of Benares. So long as Benares was in sight he laid his heart at the feet of Viswanath.

Who can describe the scene of sorrow that followed ? Who could fill the void thus created in the bosom of the Sevashram, which like the bereaved mother was steeped in extreme sorrow ? Who would wipe out the tears of the poor patients whose heart-rending cries were a living testimony to their gratefulness, their attachment and their love for their saviour ?

XXVI

HOW THE USELESS LUMP WAS DISPOSED OF

The refreshing Himalayan breeze, the music of the flowing water of the Ganges, and the natural scenery at Kankhal partly removed in a few days the unwillingness to depart from Benares.

On the pleasant morning of the first day of Baisakh, the remembrance of the parting scene at Benares was perhaps fading away before some unknown celestial melody. Crossing layer after layer, one after the other sunny peaks, the mind was rising with the free air higher and higher up towards the limitless unknown heights. At dawn what a beautiful natural scenery lay open before him. What a clear and pure atmosphere in keeping with the lightness of his body and the unfettered freedom ! He is free from all illness, all pain. The lyre of his soul is resounding to some unknown melody which he perceives in nature all around him even in the murmur of a leaf and the trembling of a straw. His heart seems to be enjoying the bliss of emancipation like the lotus in full bloom in a clear lake. He seems to be saying within himself : "Come on, come on my dearest, the attachment to the world has ceased and I am free to embrace Thee !"



SWAMI SHUBHANANDA
(Charu Babu)

With a vacant look lost in reverie, Shubhanandaji started early in the morning for some unknown destination. His companion and attendant Swami Chaitanyananda had a careful eye on him. He hurried to follow him without disturbance.

Shubhananda walked on towards Hardwar by the bank of the swift flowing Ganges. He walked and walked in the same mood, Chaitanyananda following him. The latter had not the courage to call him or speak to him a word even.

Suddenly Shubhanandaji changed his course. He turned back, paused a little and advanced towards the stone steps on the bank of the Ganges, a pleasant bathing spot under teak, pine and shisham trees. He sat on the step. After some time, leaving his wrapper and sandal on the step, he alighted into the stream with folded palms. He plunged his body up to the waist but came out ; he repeated this several times.

Swami Chaitanyananda broke the silence asking, "Are you going to take a bath ?" The Swami replied in a feeble voice : "No."

Chaitanyananda knew that he used to rub oil on the body before bathing ; but it was not possible that day because he was already in water. He thought that he would surely take a bath and would require a piece of cloth after that.

Thinking that he would be able to fetch a piece of cloth from the Ashram while he would be bathing, Swami Chaitanyananda hurried towards the Ashram.

Chaitanyananda returned soon. He stood aghast on reaching the spot! Swami Shubhananda was not there. His sandal was there, his wrapper was there but he was not found. He called aloud, but received in return a sneering echo from the opposite bank. Chaitanyananda was startled! There was no human being near. He looked around in vain. It suddenly occurred to him that Swami Shubhananda could not swim. It shocked him! Suppressing his feelings, he ran in the direction of the flow of the stream, keeping his searching eye on the swiftly flowing water.

At times he was out of breath; the heart was oppressed with ominous thoughts; but he ran on. At the junction of the Ganges and a canal he found some monks bathing. He eagerly asked them: "Have you seen any monk carried by the current?" They promptly replied "Yes, yes, a Bengali monk in saffron cloth came floating; we rescued him and found that he was still alive. We have just sent him to the Bengali Sevashram hospital carried by four monks."

Chaitanyananda was extremely sorry at this news. He ran to the Ashram. His sorrow and repentance knew no bounds at what he saw there. He found a doctor and the Sevakas of the Ashram trying to revive Swami Shubhananda. He eagerly made his way through the ring of monks and sat by the body which had baffled all attempts to revive it. The soul had flown away to heaven

leaving the mortal body into the waters of the Ganges.

This sight greatly moved Chaitanyananda, who regretted that he with other monks were not given an opportunity to serve him even at the last moment.

He was the spirit of service incarnate. Chaitanyananda's eyes were filled with tears as he surveyed the noble life of the great Swami Shubhananda. He thought within himself "Go, great soul, into the region of brightness and immortality. You never wanted anything and you will want nothing. But we shall cherish the noble ideal of your life, remember the awe-inspiring consecration of the self to the service of the poor, and the ambrosial influence of your dispassion on those who had the good fortune to come in touch with you. Go you may from this world, but you will ever remain indelibly engraved in the hearts of the Sevakas and impressed on every page of the history of the Sevashram ! You have deprived us of the sight of your mortal self only, but the eternal part will rise in us with tenfold vigour. Your service, your work, your dispassion have raised your associates to such a level of enthusiasm for the work and delight in it that the spirit of service cannot but survive for all time to come. Go you may higher beyond a hundred heavens, your remembrance can not be effaced from this earth. The teacher of the world has taught that service is the highest Heaven of all Heavens. You have per-

fectly illustrated this in your life. Were you a man ? If so, let the world be filled with men like yourself." Thus some in silence, others in sobs, the Sevakas bemoaned the great loss they had sustained. Then they called aloud : "Come all the Sevakas, let us again consign the holy remains of the great monk to the sacred waters of the Ganges."

Mother Ganges was waiting for her son. She concealed him in her bosom. The news spread to all the centres of the Sri Sri Ramkrishna Mission in lightning speed. With the approach of the evening and the first day of Baisakh in the year 1333, Bengali era, every body heard that the brightest sun among them had set.

We today remember so many things he said and did. On more than one occasion he was heard to say : "It is useless to keep this body on this earth, when it becomes decrepit and infirm and is no longer fit for service to others. A real worker, when he finds that the body demands leave from active service, will do well to cast this useless lump into the peaceful lap of mother Ganges for eternal peace and rest. How can the drudgery of dragging this useless burden compare with the delight of such consecration ?. My highest ambition is to serve Nara-Narayanas with this body... How can I bear even the idea of being served by others ? You may call such consecration suicide ; but is it not a greater suicide to imprison the soul in a broken cage ? Is it better to chain the soul to an inactive body from

which it is seeking emancipation, or to allow it to proceed unrestricted to the Unlimited? When I shall find that according to His will this body will no longer be subject to the bondage of action, that action has merged in Him, I shall return His body to Him. This will bring peace to action, the body and the universe."

Such topics always moved his heart greatly. Sometimes he would say:

"Casting this mortal sheath, as did Lord Gauranga in the moonlit fluid of the heaving ocean, as did his disciple the devout hero, Thakur Narottam Das, into the holy stream of the Ganges, as did Paohari Baba into the sacrificial fire, is a step to immortality; Those, whose motto is त्यागेनैकेन अमृतत्वमानशुः (only by self-sacrifice attain immortality) know the delight of giving which is their highest ambition. When they find that this body cannot give anything more to anybody, they prefer itself to be given away!" A sort of glow illumined his features when he addressed us in this strain, but we did not then understand the full import. Today we have understood that the great giver, the soul absorbed in the spirit of service, the great man of dispassionate action, the blissful devotee, has given away to the poor every thing he had, every bit of energy derivable from the body and at last has given away himself to be merged into the Unlimited.

Ramprosad has sung:

'Oh mother, the fruit of all action art thou, and

life's close is the fee that completes the sacrifice ! Thy son is now all love, and even Death stands before him with folded palms.'

Thus did Swami Shubhananda pay the sacrificial fee with his life and fitly concluded the long drawn sacrifice—i.e. the mission of service to which he had dedicatad himself. Perhaps that moment he had heard an inner call from Sri Sri Ramkrishna Deva and Swami Vivekananda from Heaven, and rushed forward to merge into the Universal Soul.

This Universe is His ; you are He ; pain, disease and sorrow are His manifestations ; action is His ; religion is His ; He is all ; He pervades all. His spirit permeates through the minutest particle ; bliss is His emotion ; He is the culmination of action ; He is the store of knowledge ; He verily is Truth ; He is the eternal spirit of service ; He is "the creator, the created, the cause, the effect, the something unknowable, unthinkable !"

Peace ! Peace ! Peace !

Conclusion

There is a deep-rooted belief in India, current from ancient times, that those, who want to gain a knowledge of the Monistic Vedanta and merge the individual consciousness into the Universal one, can do so only by renouncing the world completely and leading an ascetic life in the forest ; all the tender feelings like respect, love, sympathy, fellow-feeling etc. have to be banished from the heart which

should not be swayed by these sentiments. In a heart prepared thus there is no access for anything else than the Atman Purusha or Parabrahma distinct from all other things in the universe. Such ascetics have to avoid the world and its inhabitants as sources of destruction. This avoidance, in some cases, may mislead the ascetic by developing in him an antipathy towards the created world. This path is therefore suitable for those of the strongest intellect and power who can overcome difficulties and avoid pitfalls, ultimately realizing the highest aim of their effort namely, unification with the Universal consciousness or Supreme Soul. Such men are, however, very few in this world. Salvation should not be reserved for the fittest only. All should have a chance. The goal remaining the same, easier paths should be chalked out for the common people, not advanced enough to receive Monistic knowledge, so that they may also advance towards the goal.

Swami Vivekananda showed the new path which had been indicated by Lord Ramkrishna. Those who are strong and hardy can climb up the mountain to have a plunge into the Ganges at the source, but the holy stream was brought on the plains by Bhagirath for the good of all.

Like Bhagirath, Lord Sri Ramkrishna brought the light of Vedantism from the thick forest of hardihood on the summit of penance and austerity to every home on the earth. His "Leela Prasanga" sheds this light.

The essence of the new gospel propounded by Sri Ramkrishna and Vivekananda is this:

Man cannot be the judge of the action of man. Man has, first of all, to believe and realize that it is God Himself manifested in His creation.

All human beings, with whom man comes in contact every moment of his life, whom he respects, reveres, loves and sympathises with, are all His parts—all this is He—the Soul, the Brahman.

Bhagavan Shankaracharya's 'Shivoham' (I am He) points to the same direction. The soul that is in me resides in others also. These individual souls are but parts of the supreme soul. A number of jars filled from a stream contain the same substance water. It is the same 'Shiva' which pervades all.

The realization of this truth removes pride and egoism, which contaminate man and generate in him anger, antipathy and other lower propensities. Even the pride of showing kindness to others can not touch his mind. Thus when the mind is purged of egoism man realizes his eternal self which is distinguished by perfect purity, absolute freedom, and perfect consciousness. This is the path of Knowledge.

The followers of the path of Devotion also say that so long as the devotee cannot realize the existence of his deity in all creatures around him, as did Prahlad, his devotion is not perfect.

The life of the wise is successful, if, realizing the identity of the soul, he can treat others accordingly.

The life of the devotee, similarly, is worth living if he can see God in all creatures and embrace them as such ! Both the paths merge into each other in the region in which the practical realization is achieved. When the idea is translated into action, when external behaviour faithfully represents internal belief and theoretical considerations, action or behaviour becomes service, which is nothing but the attempt to remove the misery and distress of others by staking one's all, nay, even one's very life-blood. Service is the only true path for the achievement of the highest culmination of humanity.

Swami Vivekananda has said the same thing in a different way in his 'Raja Yoga':— When man cannot remain inactive for a moment, both the wise and the devotee ean easily reach their goals by devoting that action to the service of those with whom they come in contact, regarding them as so many different forms of the same spirit."

The sage Yajnavalkya has also suggested the same path for the householder in the Upanishads:—

The love of the husband for the wife is due to the existence, in the wife, of Narayana (God) as Atman (Self or Soul), for soul delights in soul. The same is true of the wife's love for the husband. The soul seeks satisfaction in this world. Children are not dear to the parents for the pleasure or happiness of the children, but they are dear to the parents for the pleasure of their souls. There is no satisfaction without soul. Even things like money

and jewels are coveted because they bring a sort of pleasure to the soul. Birds and animals are liked by man for a similar reason. Thus from the minutest atom to the biggest planet, from the lowest to the highest creature, whoever or whatever attracts man's mind with love, has this power owing to the manifestation of soul in it.

It is quite natural that this teaching of the ancient sages may easily be misinterpreted as selfishness, which is the main spring of all actions; since I love myself, I love others. Swami Vivekananda elucidated this point thus:—"The so-called 'I' is not the real 'I'. The limited 'I' of the individual is only a fraction of the all pervading 'I'. That which prevents the individual 'I' from realizing its identity with the greater 'I' is selfishness, which is also love of the self in a limited sphere: it is a small part of that bliss which is the very attribute of the Self. When anybody loves another it is done through the soul. Those who love others without knowing the nature of the soul become selfish while those who love with such knowledge become emancipated sages.

The difficulty arises when we limit love. If I love anybody as distinct from the Soul, it is not true love; it is selfishness which is the source of bondage and brings sorrow in its train; however, the same object when viewed as part of the soul alters the case and promotes pure love. When we are attached to the universe as an entity distinct from the soul,

there is always a reaction in the shape of sorrow and misery. But when we view the same as part and parcel of the soul, and enjoy it as such, there is no reaction—there is Bliss!"

Ideas and feelings are sources both of bondage and freedom, sorrow and happiness. Knowledge of Self and its realization give rise to all sorts of happiness. Sages have indicated the way in which knowledge of the Self can be obtained. First of all one should hear discourses on the Self, then they should be comprehended, and finally the Self has to be meditated on. Thus, gradually man can realize the Self. Want of realization on our part of the Self has made a hell of this beautiful earth. The moment we shall be able to dispel the ephemeral ideas of good and evil in the light of the soul, it will again be changed into a heaven.

Such teachings have been current in India from time immemorial.

The great divine sage Narada also in his Aphorisms on Devotion' has taught us to change the course of the evil emotions like desire, anger, etc., towards God:—"If you have to desire anything, desire Him. If you have to love anybody love Him". They have thus advised mankind to love Him in any of the nine different phases of devotion.

With these feelings, or with the knowledge of the self, all human efforts should aim at the unification of the individual soul with the all-pervading Universal One. The motive force behind these

efforts is the expansion of the individual soul, through love, which in turn leads to free action. This is Practical Vedanta, the basic principle of which is service to Humanity; to remove at all costs the sorrow and misery of others with a feeling of oneness with them.

APPENDIX

THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION

(Established in 1886)

President : **Swami Shivananda**
Secretary : **Swami Suddhananda**
Head-Quarters : **Sri Ramkrishna Mission**
Belur Math *Dist.* **Howrah, Bengal**

(Registered in 1909 under Act XXI of the Governor General of India)

Objects stated briefly are:

1. To impart and promote a real knowledge of Hinduism, the religion of the Vedas, by means of preachers trained in the Ramkrishna Math at Belur, near Howrah and other places.

2. To look upon all men, women and children, irrespective of sect, colour, creed or caste, as veritable manifestations of the Lord, worship them as such by trying to remove all their needs and sufferings, physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual.

3. The Mission stands for an idea and an ideal. The several social, charitable and educational institutions of the Mission embody the idea that true service is one of the most efficient means of self-

purification and God-realization, and here the monks work in co-operation with lay members. The monasteries of the order composing the Sadhus lay stress of the ideal of renunciation, and are dedicated to the perpetuation of the spiritual culture which Sri Ramkrishna embodied in his life.

II. Prominent Branches of the Mission

There are at present the following important branches of the Mission including preaching, publication, educational and charitable centres, working with the above objects in view in different parts of the world, :—Bengal 26, Assam 3, Behar & Orissa 7, United Provinces 11, Delhi 1, Bombay 2, Central Provinces 1, Madras 8, Mysore 2, Travancore & Malabar 6, Ceylon 4, Burma 2, Straits Settlement 1, U. S. A. 11, F. M. S. 1.

Besides the above mentioned centres about 40 separate non-affiliated centres are engaged in similar activities with the approval of the authorities of the Ramkrishna Mission.

III. Local Committee of the Benares Home of Service in the year 1932.

The Governing Body of the Ramkrishna Mission has appointed the following persons to form a Local Committee for carrying on the work of the Branch Centre of the Mission at Benares, known as the Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service :—

Swami Narottamananda, Benares City,
Chief Supervisor.
Hon. Sir Raja Motichand Saheb, Kt. C. I. E, Benares,
President.
Rai Bahadur Babu Lalit Behari Sen Roy,
Private Secretary to
H. H. the Maharaja of Benares, Vice President.
Babu Baldeo Das Saheb,
Hony. Magistrate, „ *Hony. Treasurer.*
Rai Govind Chandra Saheb
M. A., „ „ *Secretary.*
Swami Asimananda, (on leave) „ „ *Asst. Secy.*
„ Satyananda „ offg. „ *Asst. Secy.*
Dr. Amar Nath Banerjee,
L.M.S., Ph. G., „ *Member.*
Capt. S. K. Chowdhury,
M.B., M.B.F., *Chief*
Medical Officer, Benares State, „
Rai Bahadur Srinath Misra, *Benares* „
Sj. R. N. Roy, Engineer, „ „
Babu Sita Ram Sah Saheb,
B. A., „ „
Moulavi Abdul Majid Saheb,
B. L., „ „
Babu Bimal Chandra Gupta,
Advocate, „ „
„ Nanda Lal Deb, Advocate, „ „
Munshi Bimala Nandan
Prasad, Hony. Munsif, „ „
Swami Sadashivananda, „ „

Swami Achalananda,	*Benares*	*Member*
,, Amarananda.	,,	,,
,, Sarveshananda,	,,	,,
,, Raghubarananda,	,,	,,
,, Atmaprakashananda,	,,	,,
,, Abadhutananda,	,,	,,
,, Satyatmananda,	,,	,,
Sj. Bipin Behari Banerjee, M. A., retd., Dy. Magistrate.,		*Hony. Auditor.*

IV. The Object of the Home of Service.

Its object has been to serve those who have none to help when dark days of starvation, old age, diseases and death overcome them and make them feel the want of a friendly hand more than ever.

The methods adopted, with a view to secure this object have been :—

(i) To find out neglected sufferers, lying in utter helplessness in the streets, lanes, private houses and at the bathing ghats, and render all possible assistance by admitting them into the Home and giving them clothing, medical treatment, nursing, diet and the like, as long as they are in need.

(ii) To help such sufferers :—

(a) By sending them to the Government and other Hospitals in case of want of accommodation in the Home.

(b) By providing medical treatment, diet and nursing (when the sufferers have a shelter of their

own), or any one or two of the aforesaid forms of help when they are able to secure for themselves the rest.

(iii) To find out old, infirm and disabled persons, and *Pardanashin* ladies, who have seen better days but are now reduced to extreme poverty, who prefer a slow death through starvation to begging, and help them :—

(a) By sending to their homes weekly doles of rice and some pecuniary help.

(b) By giving them shelter and provision in the Home when they are incapable of looking after themselves.

(iv) To render all this assistance, with special attention to their feelings and prejudices, and providing for them a decent cremation if they happen to die without means at the Home.

V. The work of the Home for the year 1932 may be divided into the following heads :—

(a) In-door General Hospital, (b) Refuge for the aged men, (c) Refuge for women invalids, (d) Girls' Home (e) Home for paralytic patients, (f) Dharamsala for the poor and the helpless, (g) Out-door Dispensary, (h) Out-door help to invalids and poor ladies of respectable families in money and kind, (i) Special and Occasional Relief.

VI. Classification of persons treated and relieved in the In-door and Out-door according to their residential Province and Religion.

Residential Provinces	In-door	Out-door
Assam	15	87
Bengal Presidency	498	3658
Behar and Orissa	90	488
United Provinces	722	36761
The Punjab	11	172
Rajputana	5	91
Central Provinces	20	142
Central India	4	83
Bombay Presidency	16	89
Madras Presidency	118	310
Nepal and Bhutan	44	161
Native States	37	99
Ceylon	2	35
Other Places	25	74
Total ...	1,607	42,250

Religion :—	In-door	Out-door
Hindus	1,592	34,176
Mahomedans	14	8,040
Christians	1	34
Total ...	1,607	42,250

VII Endowments (in G. P. Notes.)

Particulars.	Face Value Rs.
Years 1911–14	
Sm. Mundkoor Uma Bai, for patients	1,700
1912	
Babu Dwaraka Nath Ray. „ a Bed	2,000
„ Paramananda Sen, „ Patients	500
1912–17	
Three Hindu Ladies for worker's fund	400
1913–28	
Estate of late N. C. Das, for the indigent	12,200
1913	
Sm. Bindu Dasi, for widow's Fund	100
1914	
Swami Chidghananda Bharati for patients	1,100
Sj. R. M. Chatterjee	100
1914–15	
Sm. Rajabala Devi memorial	1,000
1916	
Babu Haradhan Nag for a Bed	3,000
Sm. Muktakeshi Devi for patients	100
Babu Benode Behari Mukherjee	100
1916–32	
Sm. Tara Sundari Dasi	1,200
1917–22	
For Akshaya Kumar Ghosh's ward	5,700

1917

Rai Bahadur Durgadas Bose		5,000
Babu Jnanendra Nath Bose	for a Bed	3,000
Sm. Hemantabala Bose for a invalid Bed		2,000
Babu Paran Chandra Dutt for patients		1,700
Sm. Benode Behari Dasi		500

1918

Harasanker Dass Kshetramoni Dasi	for a Bed	4,500
Trivedi Jethabhai Ambhaidas and Haribhai		1,500
Babu Janaki Nath Sen, for worker's Fund		100

1919

Rai Iswar Chandra Mitra Bahadur Estate	for patients	35,000
Pt. Rama Sanker Misra for two paupers		3,700
Balaram Krishna Bhamini for patients		1,600
"Shmashan Mitra Kutir"	,,	1,000
Babu Gopal Chandra Sur		500
Sm. Nabin Kali Devi		500
Sj. B. M. Saha Kundu and Parama S. Dasi		300
Babu Mani Mohan Banerjee for Patients		100

1920

Sj. Narayan Chandra Mukherjee	,,	500
,, Kshirode B. Chatterjee for Patients		100

1921

Sj. Kishori Mohan Sikdar for invalid Beds		10,000
,, Atul Chandra Mitra for patients		1,600

1921-32

Particulars.		Face Value Rs.
Rai Bahadur Bhuban Mohan Bose		1,400
1921		
Sj. Haranath Bose		400
Sm. Krishna Bhamini Dasi		200
1922-32		
Sm. Prasanna Dasi	for patients	900
1922-23		
Swami Turiyananda Memorial	„	300
1922		
Sm. Kailasmoni Dasi	„	400
A Lady sympathiser	„	200
For Haripada Dey memorial	„	200
Ivy Memorial	„	200
Babu Parna Ch. Bysak	„	200
Balaram Baijnath fund	„	200
Sm. Bhuban Mohini Devi	„	100
„ Sukhoda Sundari	„	100
Babu Ram Lall Sinha	„	800
Sm. Raj Laxmi Dasi	„	500
1923		
Must. Chandri Bibi	for feeding the poor	7,800
Sm. Ushangini Biswas	for a Bed	5,000
„ Nalini Sundani Dasi	for a Bed	2,400
„ Surabala Devi	„	2,000

Particulars.		Face value Rs.
Sj. Nagendra Ch. Das	for patients	1,550
Sm. Mani Dasi	„	650
Raja Manindra Ch. Sinha	„	500
Sj. Mahendra Nath Chatterjee	„	100
Sm. Thakomani Dasi	„	300
Must. Chandramukhi Devi	„	200
„ Munni Devi	„	200
Sm. Kumudini Rai Choudhury	„	100

1923–32

Sj. Ganga Charan Mukherjee & his wife Sm. Suniti Devi		18,000

1924

For Nanda Lal Ghosh's ward	„	11,700
Sm. Aghormoni Dasi	„	1,000
Late Babu Jadunath Ghosh	„	500
Sj. Shyama Charan Sen	„	500
Late Sm. Hemlata Dasi	„	200

1925

Sj. Girish Chandra Chatterjee, for a Bed		3,500
Kumar Lakshindra Narayan and Sm. Sarveswari Ayee Devi, for a Bed		3,500
Sajba Yashawant Rajadhyaksha for patients		1,500
In memory of Sm. Rajabala Devi, Sugandha		1,200
Sj. Akshaya Kumar Mukherjee	„	700

Particulars.		Face value Rs.
1926		
Sm. Satyavati Dasi	for patients	3,200
„ Chunimoni Dasi	„	600
Sj. Bhut Nath Seth	„	500
„ Kashi Nath Safawala	„	200
„ Harakanta Mukherjee	„	100
Sm. Mandakini Bai	„	100
„ Janki Bai	„	100
„ Lakshmi Bai	„	100
1927		
Estate of Late Babu Ram Ch. Mitra		5,000
In memory of Late Babu ındra Kumar Sircar for a Bed		5,000
Dr. Raj Chandra Dutt and late Babu Jogendra Nath Dutt		5,000
Sj. Girindra Nath and Sj. Birendra Nath Mitra for patients		500
„ Harendra Nath Mukherjee, for an invalid Bed		3,000
1928		
„ Dasarathi Mukherjee, In memory of Sm. Sovamayee Devi for a Bed		5,400
R. B. Kailash Ch. Bose	„	4,000
Memorial of a Sympathiser's wife (through J. C. Roy, Benares)	„	4,000
In memory of Late Babu Ram Chandra Mukherjee, for patients		1,300
Sm. Swarna Mayee Dasi's Memorial		700

Particulars.	Face value Rs.
In memory of Late Babu Khetrapal Singh	500
A Sympathiser for workers' Fund	500
Swami Saradananda Memorial for workers	300
In memory of Late Sm. Asrulata Laha For patient ,,	100
Sm. Bagala Mukhi Devi ,,	100
Sj. Ambika Nath Sarma Biswas ,,	100
Babu Brij Kishore Tandan Khetri for medicine	100
1929-30	
In memory of late Sm. Binapani Dey, for patients	[illegible]
1929	
In memory of Subhadra Devi (Thr. Kumar Gajendra Narayan) for a Bed	4,100
Sm. Biraj Kumari Bose's Memorial for medicine	1,000
R. S. Ishan Ch. Ghose, for Subscription	700
In memory of N. C. Sarkar, for workers' fund	500
Sm. Moni Kumari Chhatrani—for Patient	[illegible]
1930	
,, Krishna Kamini Dasi	1,500
In memory of Babu Kshetra Mohan Dutta for medicine	1,500
Estate of Late Babu Beni Madhab Neogy for Patients	17,000

Particulars.	Face value Rs.
In memory of Sm. Gobinda Moni Devi for medicine	500
Iu memory of the grand mother of Prof. S. L. Dar, M. A. for workers' Fund	100
In memory of Babu Satya Chara Bose for Patients	1,500
In memory of Shyama Charan Banerjee for Patients	200
Estate of Late Babu Jadupati Chatterjee	1,20,000
Sm. Promoda Sundari Sircar for Paralytic Patients	500
In Post Office Cash Certificate from General fund	17,300
1930-32	
Estate of Late Babu Dasharathi Banerjee for patients	16,000
General and Building Fund Investments in G. P. Notes	53,400
1931	
Sj. Jitendra Nath Bose, Calcutta	1,000
In memory of Shashi Mukhi Dasi	1,100
" " " Ramani Mani Dasi	5,000
" " " Kunja Behari Chini	400
Sm. Draupadi Devi, Benares	200
In memory of Bimal Ch. Ghose for a typhoid Bed	4,000
Seva Publishing Fund	500

Particulars.	Face value Rs.
1931-32	
In memory of Woomesh Ch. Biswas	1,700
1932	
In memory of Debendra Nath, Sm. Hari Dasi and Sm. Sushila Bala Dasi	11,200
In memory of Bhabani Ch. Ghosh	3,700
In memory of Jotindra Nath Bose and Gabendra Ch. Datta	8,000
Swami Shubhananda memorial Fund	1,300
Jnanananda Karunamay	2,800
Sri Ganapat Rao	200
Khan Bahadur M. Makbul Alam	100
Swami Raghubarananda	400
Est. H. C. Banerjee	2,000
Pandit Bhavani Sankar	400
Grand Total	495,000

THE immortal can be reached only by continuous acts of kindness, and perfection is accomplished by compassion and charity.

BUDDHA

IF thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

CHRIST

GIVE ye your alms openly? It is well. Do you conceal them and give to the poor? This too will be of advantage to you, and will do away your sins: and God is cognizant of your actions.

MUHAMMAD

JIVA is Shiva (Man is divine), who can show mercy to him? No mercy but service by looking upon man as God.

RAMKRISHNA

WHOEVER will be ready to serve Him—no, not Him but His Children—the poor and the down-trodden, the sinful and the afflicted, down to the very worms—who will be ready to serve these, in them He will manifest Himself.

VIVEKANANDA